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SAMUEL BROHL

AND

PARTNER.

BY VICTOR CHERBULIEZ.

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SAMUEL BROHL AND PARTNER.

CHAPTER I.

WERE the events of this lower world governed by the law of probabilities, we might imagine that Count Abel Larinski and Mademoiselle Antoinette Moriaz would have ended their career without ever having met. Count Larinski lived in Vienna; Mademoiselle Moriaz only quitted Paris to spend the fine season of the year at Cormeilles. She had never heard, either at Cormeilles or in Paris, of Count Larinski, and he, on his side, was quite unaware of Mademoiselle Moriaz's existence. He was wholly occupied with a gun of his own invention, which was to make his fortune and which failed to do so. He hoped that this weapon, which he considered a real master-piece, superior in precision and range to anything known, would be appreciated according to its merits by competent judges, and be one day adopted to arm all the Austro-Hungarian infantry regiments. By dint of great exertion, he had succeeded in obtaining the nomination of an official commission to experiment upon it. The commission decided that there were certain advantages possessed by the Larinski rifle, but that it had three defects; it was too heavy, it fouled too quickly, and its cost of production was too high. Count Larinski did not lose heart. He set to work again on his invention, spent

nearly two years in improving it, and took pains to make his rifle lighter and less expensive. On being again tried, the weapon burst, and this vexatious incident destroyed the reputation of the Larinski rifle for ever. Instead of making a fortune, the inventor was out of pocket by his expenses and outlay of every kind : he had spent both his capital and income, which, certainly, were not large.

Fate was more favourable to Mademoiselle Antoinette Moriaz, than to Count Abel Larinski. She did not trouble herself about inventing a new rifle, and was by no means reduced to her wits for a living ; she had inherited from her mother an income of nearly 100,000 francs, which enabled her to enjoy life and make others happy, for she was extremely charitable. She liked the world without liking it too much ; she could do without it, she had mental resources and a frank disposition. During the winter she went out a good deal and saw plenty of society. Her father, a member of the Institute, and Professor of chemistry at the Collège de France, was one of those savants who like dining out ; he was also fond of music and the theatre. Antoinette accompanied him everywhere ; they were hardly ever at home except on the nights when they received company ; but, when the swallows returned, Mademoiselle Moriaz was delighted to make her escape to Cormeilles, and stay there for seven months, reduced to the society of Mademoiselle Moiseney, who, after being her governess, had become her companion. She lived out of doors, strolled in the woods, read, and painted ; and the woods, with her books and pencils, to say nothing of her poor people, occupied her time so agreeably, that she never felt ennuï for a quarter of an hour. She was too well satisfied with her lot to wish to change it, and was in no hurry to marry. She was turned twenty-four, had refused several offers, and wished for nothing better than to remain single. This was the only point

on which the heiress and those about her disagreed. When her father was on the point of growing angry, and cried, "I wish it!" she began to laugh, and he laughed too, saying: "I am not the master here; I seem like the boy teaching his grandmother."

It is dangerous to overwork your brain if you dine out often. During the winter of 1875, M. Moriaz overworked himself, over-taxed his powers, and injured his health. He was attacked by one of those anæmic complaints of which we hear so much now-a-days; it being the fashionable ailment. He was obliged to break off his lectures and engage a substitute, and early in July, his doctor ordered him off to the Engadine to take a course of iron waters at St. Moritz. There is no getting from Paris to St. Moritz without passing through Chur. It was at Chur that Mademoiselle Antoinette Moriaz, who accompanied her father, first met Count Abel Larinski. When fate takes the matter into her hands, the spider and fly meet.

Abel Larinski was on his way from Vienna; he had travelled viâ Milan and the Splügen Pass. Though his funds were rather low when he alighted in the chief town of the Grisons, he put up at the Steinbock Hotel, the best and dearest in the place. He thought that this was incumbent upon Count Larinski; this kind of duty was sacred to him, and he discharged it religiously. He was in a very melancholy frame of mind, and took a walk to divert his thoughts. On crossing the bridge over the Plessur, he fixed his troubled eyes on the muddy waters of the torrent, and was almost tempted to jump in; but in such projects there is a wide difference between intention and execution, and Count Larinski found under these circumstances that the saddest man in the world has some difficulty in curing himself of his love of life.

He had little reason to be cheerful. He had left Vienna

bound for the casino at Saxon, where roulette and trent-et-quarante are played. His ill luck led him to halt at Milan, and he introduced to a club of not very good repute, where he imprudently played and lost. He had just enough money left to take him on to Saxon; but what can any one do in a casino with empty pockets? Before crossing the Splügen he had written to a little Jew banker of his acquaintance for some money. He hardly reckoned upon the Hebrew's compliance, and this made him stand for five minutes gazing at the Plessur, before he retraced his steps. Twenty minutes later he crossed a square ornamented with a pretty gothic fountain, and, seeing a cathedral facing him, entered.

The cathedral at Chur contains, among other curiosities, a painting by Albert Durer, a St. Lawrence on the gridiron attributed to Holbein, a piece of the true cross, and the relics of St. Lucius and his sister Ernesta. Abel gave but little attention to St. Lucius and St. Lawrence. He had scarcely reached the nave when he perceived an object which seemed to him more interesting than picture or relic. An English poet has said that paradise is sometimes found on a woman's face, and that there is no seeing the paradise without feeling a wish to enter it. Although Count Larinski was not a romantic man, he remained for some instants motionless, as if admiration had nailed him to the spot. Was this a forewarning of his destiny? It is a fact that on seeing Mademoiselle Antoinette Moriaz for the first time, he experienced a peculiar surprise and beating of the heart which was new to him. He made a mistake at first about this charming girl. He guessed at once that the man who accompanied her and who had grey hair, a wide open brow, and bright eyes shadowed by handsome, well-marked eyebrows, belonged to some learned fraternity; but he imagined that this white cravatted gentleman, though over sixty, had preserved a youthful heart and was in luck at that moment.

There are some women whom it is impossible not to look at. Wherever Mademoiselle Antoinette Moriaz went, she was looked at, firstly, because she was charming, and secondly, because she had her own way of dressing herself and her hair, which, with certain little turns of her head, and a rather easy grace in her gait and carriage, attracted attention. Some people maintained that she liked to astonish the passers-by, and was not afraid of being taken for what she was not. I do not believe this. She was indifferent to public opinion, and in all matters consulted her own taste, which was sometimes daring; but she was never so consciously, it was part of her nature. People seeing her at a distance sometimes said: Ah, there goes an adventuress. They were soon disabused on approaching her; the purity of her look, her distinguished and perfectly modest air, drove away every evil suspicion, and their mental comment was: Forgive me, mademoiselle, for making such a mistake. This was almost the speech mentally addressed to her by Count Abel, as she passed by him on leaving the church. Her father was telling her something which made her smile; the smile was that of a young girl old enough to be a wife, and who has nothing as yet to conceal from her guardian angel. Count Larinski followed her out and kept her in sight to the end of the square. On returning to his hotel, he had some curiosity to satisfy. He questioned a waiter, who showed him these words in the travellers' list: *M. Moriaz, member of the Institute of France, and daughter, on their way from Paris to St. Moritz.* "And after that?" he asked himself, and thought no more about it.

After dining, he went to the post-office to inquire for a letter that he was expecting from Vienna. He found it there, and, returning, shut himself up in his room, where he tore open the missive with a feverish hand. The letter, which was written in French more singular than elegant,

was the reply from the little Jewish banker. It ran to the following effect :

"Count: though you speak and understand German pretty well, you do not like reading it, so I write in French. I am very sorry to be unable to comply with your esteemed request. Business is very bad. It is perfectly impossible for me to advance you another florin or even to renew your bill, which will shortly fall due. I greatly regret having to remind you that I am the father of a family.

"I wish to give you my opinion freely. I believed in your rifle, but I have ceased to believe in it, and so has every one else. When it was safe, it was heavy; when it was light it was no longer safe. What could be done! You know that it burst. Beware of improving it any further, or it will explode as soon as it feels it is looked at. This wretched rifle has consumed all your property, as well as a little of mine, though I feel confident that you will pay at least the interest that has accrued. It grieves me to mention it, but it is a fact that every inventor has some little bee in his bonnet and ends in the asylum. For heaven's sake, let rifles alone, and invent nothing more, or you will sink to depths from which you can never be fished up."

At this point Abel Larinski ceased reading. He put the letter down on the table, and throwing himself back in his easy-chair with a wild look, fixing his eyes on a corner of the room, he began to say in a hollow voice :

"You hear that, fool! The old fellow is right. Cursed be the day when the genius of invention first troubled your sublime brain! What a rare find you had! What has it brought me! Great illusions and great misfortunes. What has been the result of my spending whole nights in talking with you about breech-loaders, plates, triggers, grips, levers, conical bullets and spiral springs? What profits have I

gained by these diverting conversations? You were a great man and foresaw everything, except—I know not what to call it—that trifle which great men do not think about, and which makes things succeed. When you talked to me in your slow monotonous voice, when you fixed your melancholy gaze upon me, I ought to have read in your eyes that you were but a blockhead The devil take you and your rifle, your rifle and you, empty head, chimerical brain, a true Pole, a true Larinski !”

To whom was Count Abel talking? To a phantom, or his double? He alone knew. When he had vented his wrath, he went on with his letter, which concluded as follows :—

“Will you allow me to give you some advice, Count, just one bit of good advice? I have known you for three years, and take an interest in your fortunes. You invent guns, and when they are safe, they are not light enough. Excuse me, but I can't understand you. You bear a noble name; you carry a magnificent head on your shoulders and are generally thought to resemble Faust; but you don't turn either your name or your head to account. Leave rifles alone, and turn your attention to women; it is the women who will bring you to the surface again. There is no time to be lost. Excuse me, but you are thirty, and perhaps a little over. That wretched gun has made you throw away three precious years.

“I much regret having to remind you, Count, that the little bill is nearly due. I have had the bracelet valued which was left with me as a deposit; it is not worth a thousand florins, as you thought; it is a little antique, which would only suit people with a fancy for curiosities, and fancies are rare now-a-days; there is not time for them.

“I remain Count, with much respect, your most humble and obedient servant,

MOSES GULDENTHAL.”

Abel Larinski threw himself back again in his chair. He crumpled Moses Guldenthal's letter between his fingers, saying to himself that the Guldenthals have sometimes ideas or inspirations. "Yes," thought he, "this Jew is right, I have thrown away three precious years. I have had a fever, and a cloud has hung over my eyes; but, thank heaven, the charm is broken, the illusion has fled, and I am cured and delivered. Farewell, my chimera, I will be its dupe no longer. Many thanks, my dear fellow, I will restore you your rifle; do what you like with it."

His eyes fell on the mirror over the mantelpiece, he looked at himself for a few seconds. "It is indeed the face of an inventor," he continued with a smile. "This pale wan complexion, the rings round the eyes, these hollow, almost sunken cheeks. . . . These three years have left their traces. Bah! a little rest among Alpine pastures, and Faust will recover his youth."

He took a pen and wrote as follows:—

"You are really too kind, my dear Guldenthal; you refuse me the wretched florins that I asked for, but give me instead a piece of advice worth a fortune. Unluckily, I am not able to follow it. A word is enough to make finely organised natures understand one another, and you are a poet at certain hours. When you have done a good stroke of business during the day, after rubbing your hands till you have almost taken the skin off them, you tune your violin, which you play like an angel, and draw from it such delightful tones that your ledger and strong box begin to shed tears of emotion. I too am a musician, and women are my music. They will never be to me anything but adorable and useless, the dreamy part of my life. Your dreams bring you in fifty per cent, as I know to my cost; my dreams will never bring me in anything, and for that very reason they are dear to me.

"Do not misunderstand me, I forbid you to dispose of the piece of jewellery I left with you; we Poles are so weak as to cling to our family relics. Do not be uneasy; I shall be back in Vienna before the end of the month, and will honour that nice little bill. You will be falling down at my feet one day to beg me to borrow a thousand florins of you, and I shall astonish you by my ingratitude. May the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, preserve you, my dear Guldenthal."

As he was finishing his letter, he heard the sound of harps and violins. Some itinerant musicians were giving a concert in the hotel garden, which was illuminated *a giorno*. Abel opened his window and leaned out. The first object on which his eyes fell was Mademoiselle Moriaz, walking down an avenue on her father's arm. Many people were looking at her; it was not easy, as we have said, *not* to look at her; but no one was watching her so attentively as Count Larinski. He never took his eyes off her. "Is she handsome? is she pretty?" he said to himself; "I don't know, but she is certainly charming. She is a fancy article, like my bracelet. She is a trifle thin, and her shoulders are too broad for her tall figure, which is as supple and slender as a reed; but as she is, she is univalled. Her carriage and movements are like no one else's; I fancy that when she walks in the streets of Paris, people turn to look after her, but no one would think of following her. How old is she? Twenty-four or twenty-five. Why is not she married? . . . Who is the very mature and rather plain person who trots by her side like a poodle? She must be a companion. Here comes a smart maid to bring her a shawl, and the companion hastens to wrap it round her shoulders. She receives the attention with the air of a person accustomed to be waited upon. Mademoiselle de Moriaz must be an heiress; then how is it that she is not married?"

Count Larinski was carrying on this conversation with himself all the time that Mademoiselle Moriaz was walking in the garden. As soon as she had gone into the hotel, he felt as if the garden were deserted, as if every one had left, and the harpers were playing out of tune. He closed his window. He had given up his plan of starting for Saxon on the morrow, and decided to go and stay at St. Moritz for at least two or three days. He was saying to himself: "It is absurd, but who can tell?"

He next examined into the state of his finances, and weighed and reweighed his purse, which was light. Count Larinski had once possessed rather a handsome collection of jewels. As he had some common sense and ideas of management, he looked on his jewels as a reserve fund to be always kept in the background, and only drew upon it when he was in the greatest need. Alas! he had but two valuable articles left, the bracelet in Mr. Guldenthal's hands, and a ring set with diamonds, which he wore on his finger. He determined before leaving Chur to borrow some money on his ring, or to bring himself to sell it.

For some time he remained sitting at the foot of his bed, swinging his legs with his eyes shut. He shut them the better to see Mademoiselle Moriaz, and kept repeating: "It is absurd; but who can tell?" It is a fact that we can tell nothing, and that anything may happen; then he called to mind a poem of Goethe's, entitled, *Vanitas! Vanitas! vanitas!* and repeated these two lines several times:

"Nun hab'ich mein Sach auf nichts gestellt,
Und mein gehört die ganze Welt!"

The meaning of which is: Now that I depend on nothing more, the whole world is mine. Abel Larinski repeated these two lines with a pure accent that would have surprised Moses Guldenthal.

M. Moriaz, after wishing his daughter good-night, and giving her his usual kiss on her forehead, had retired to his chamber. He was preparing to go to bed, when he heard a knock at his door. He half dressed himself again, opened it and found a fair-haired young fellow who rushed upon him, seized both his hands and shook them most demonstratively. M. Moriaz disengaged himself and looked with a startled air at the intruder.

"What," said the young man, "you don't seem to know me? As sure as you are one of the most illustrious chemists of the day, I am Camille Pangis, son of your greatest friend, a young man of considerable promise, who admires you greatly, who has attended your lectures and is ready to begin again. Come, dear master, don't you remember me?"

"Yes, yes, I remember you, my boy," replied M. Moriaz, "though you are indeed much changed. When you left us you looked a youth, a great boy."

"And now?"

"Why, now you have grown older and look the young man; but, pray, where do you come from? I thought you were far away in Transylvania."

"One can come back, as you see. I arrived in Paris three days ago, and went at once to Maisons-Laffitte. Madame de Lorey, who has the supreme honour of being both my aunt and Antoinette's—I beg pardon, Mademoiselle Antoinette Moriaz's godmother, told me that you had been ill, and that your doctor had sent you to Switzerland, to St. Moritz, to recruit. I rushed off in pursuit of you, and missed you this morning by an hour at Zurich, but now I have got possession of you and you will listen to me."

"I give you warning, dear boy, that I am a detestable listener at this moment. We have done a town-hall, an episcopal palace, a cathedral, and the relics of St. Lucius to-

'day. I am literally half asleep. Is there any great haste about what you have to tell me?"

"Any great haste? I have come straight from Hungary to ask for your daughter's hand."

M. Moriaz shook his head and threw up his arms; then, resting his elbows on the footboard of his bedstead, said: "Could you not wait till to-morrow? If a man wishes to propitiate his judge, he does not wake him from his first sleep."

"My dear master, I am exceedingly sorry to bore you, but you must really listen to me. Two years ago, I asked you for your daughter's hand for the first time. After having consulted Antoinette,—you will allow me to call her Antoinette, won't you?—After consulting her, you told me I was too young; that she did not look at the matter in a serious light, and that I had better try again in two years' time. I have been spending those two long years in making a road and a suspension bridge in Hungary, and, while building my bridge, took a world of trouble to try and forget Antoinette. It was impossible! She is the dream of my youth, and I shall never have another. Did you or did you not tell me on the 5th of July, 1873, to come again in two years? This is the 5th of July, 1875, and here I am. Am I punctual?"

"As punctual as you are wearisome," rejoined M. Moriaz, casting a melancholy glance at his pillow. "Frankly, is it the thing to present yourself before the President of the Academy of Sciences, between eleven and twelve o'clock at night, to tell him such tales as those? It shows a want of respect for the Institute. Besides, my dear boy, people change in two years; you are a proof of this, since the stripling has become almost a man. You have been wise to let your imperial grow, there is a fine defiant look about it, but while you have been changing for the better, how do you know that Antoinette has not changed for the worse? Are you sure that she is still the Antoinette of your dream?"

"Excuse me; I have just seen her without being myself seen. She was walking on your arm in the garden of the hotel, which was illuminated in honour of her. She used to be charming, she has become adorable. If you would be so amazingly kind as to bestow her upon me, I would do anything to please you. I would undertake all your little commissions, I would clean your retorts, label your phials, and sweep your laboratory. I know German well, I will read all the big German books you may wish to consult, I will read them pen in hand, and make extracts, yes, written extracts, and as to the writing, why it shall be like print. . . . Dear master, will you give her to me?"

"What an amusing fellow you are! You imagine that the disposal of my daughter rests with me. She and the moon are about equally mine to give. Ever since she cut her teeth, she has made her whims my will."

"Will you permit me, at any rate, to begin to pay my addresses to her to-morrow?"

"Take care you don't, imprudent youth!" cried M. Moriaz, "you would destroy your chances for ever. During your absence, she has refused two offers, a stock-broker and an under secretary at the embassy, Viscount de R——, and, at this juncture, she has conceived a holy horror of all suitors! She is going with me to St. Moritz to gather flowers and make water-colour drawings of them. If you were to think of disturbing her in her pursuits, if you were to present yourself before her as bluntly as a creditor on settling-day, I vow that she would refuse payment, and you would have nothing left but to return to Hungary."

"Are you sure of this?"

"As sure as I am that sulphuric acid will turn litmus paper red."

"And you have the heart to send me back to Paris without speaking to her?"

"What I say is for your good ; you know whether I wish you well."

"It is understood and settled then that you will look after my interests and plead my cause ?"

"It is settled that I will sound the way and prepare the ground—"

"And you will give me tidings soon, and good tidings—I will await them here, at the Steinbock."

"As you like ; but, for heaven's sake, let me get to sleep now."

M. Camille Langis threw both arms round him and said with much emotion : "I put myself in your hands, remember that you have to answer for my life."

"Oh, youth!" murmured M. Moriaz, as he pushed him out. "We may try and try, but we shall never invent anything finer than that."

Ten hours afterwards, a postchaise was bearing Mademoiselle Antoinette Moriaz, her father, her companion and her maid in the direction of the Engadine. They breakfasted tolerably at a village situated at the bottom of a hole called Tiefenkasten, which means the deep chest, and a deeper was certainly never seen ; then they drove on, and towards four in the afternoon reached the entrance of the savage defile of Bergunerstein, which deserves to be compared to the Via Mala. The road is hemmed in between a wall of rock and a precipice of nearly five hundred feet, at the foot of which roar the waters of the Albula. This wild scene affected Mademoiselle Moriaz ; she had never seen anything of the sort at Corneilles-en-Parisis. She alighted and leaned over the parapet, the better to contemplate the precipice, filled with the roar of the foaming torrent.

Her father having joined her, she asked him if he did not think the music charming.

"Charming indeed," he replied ; "but I am still more

charmed by the brave workmen, who, at the risk of breaking their necks, constructed this kind of hanging road. I think you are admiring the torrent too much and the road too little."

And after a pause he added: "I hope that our friend Camille Langis may have had less trouble in making his."

Antoinette turned and looked at her father; then she returned to her contemplation of the Albula.

"Anyway, he is a man to triumph over difficulties," resumed M. Moriaz, caressing his whiskers with the knob of his stick. "He has a youthful appearance which is very deceptive. The lad is surprisingly precocious; at twenty he came out first from the Ecole Centrale. The best point about him is, that in spite of his fortune, he has a passion, a mania for work. To be rich and work, is voluntary poverty."

A moist, fresh wind blew up from the precipice. Made-moiselle Moriaz enveloped her head in a red hood that she held in her hand, and scratching with her finger the parapet, which sparkled with some grains of mica, she inquired the name of the rock.

"It is gneiss, a kind of foliated granite; but do not you admire with me people who work when they might do nothing?"

"That means that you have a great admiration for yourself."

"Oh, as to myself, necessity made me work when young, and I acquired a habit which I cannot get rid of, whereas Camille Langis—"

"Again?" she exclaimed, with an impatient gesture. "What makes you speak to me of Camille?"

"Nothing. He often comes into my mind."

"Don't let us try to deceive each other. Have you heard of him lately?"

"That reminds me; I have heard of him through Madame de Lorey."

"My godmother, Madame de Lorey, might attend to her own business. She is an incorrigible woman."

"What do you wish her to correct?"

"Her mania for working out my happiness according to her own views—I read in your eyes that Camille has returned to Paris. What has he come to do?"

"I know nothing about it. How should I? I merely presume, I suppose—"

"You don't suppose, you know."

"Not at all; but as hypothesis is the road that leads to science, and as we savants suppose things every day—"

She again interrupted him by saying: "You know I have promised him nothing."

"Nothing actually, I agree; but you commissioned me to tell him that you thought him too young. He has been labouring conscientiously ever since to cure himself of the defect." And pinching her cheek, he continued: "You are made of objections. You will soon be twenty-five, and have refused five offers. Have you vowed to die single?"

"I see no objection, so far as I am concerned."

"But I see many. Consider, pray—"

"Oh, you are merciless," she exclaimed. "What, now, on the banks of the Albula! You know that of all topics of conversation, I find this the most distasteful."

"You wrong me, it was an unlucky thought that came across me. I spoke to you about Camille as I might have done about any one else; you took up arms, and applied it all to yourself."

Antoinette was silent for some moments. "You are certainly very fond of Camille!" she resumed.

"Of all the sons-in-law that you might suggest—"

"But I do not suggest any."

"That is just what I complain of."

"Well then, if you are so fond of this Camille, order me to marry him."

"If I order, will you obey?"

"Perhaps, for the novelty of the thing," was her laughing answer.

"Naughty girl to make fun of your own father!" he rejoined. "I have been living in slavery for the last twenty years, and it is not easy to free oneself in a day. But the Grand Monarque deigned to discuss matters with his ministers. I am Pomponne, let us discuss this."

"You know as well as I that I like Camille very much. He is the companion of my childhood, we know each other as tiny children. We played at hide and seek together, and he obeyed my every whim. These are charming reminiscences, but I remember them too clearly when I see him."

"He has been for two years among the Magyars; those two years count for something."

"Fiddlesticks! he will never have any authority over me. I mean my husband to rule me."

"That you may have the pleasure of ruling your ruler."

"And then I know him too well. I could only fall in love with a stranger."

"Was not the Viscount de R—— a stranger?"

"I knew him by heart in five minutes. He is like every other under-secretary in the world. You may be sure that he has not a single idea in his head that is really his own. Even his figure is not his own: it is a masterpiece, the joint production of his tailor, hairdresser, and hosier. Reduce him to himself, and you will see what is left."

"By this rule, the first passport to your affections would be a lack of shirts."

"If my heart were ever touched, it would be by meeting a man different from all the rest that I know. Premising

this, I should not absolutely object to his being well supplied with linen."

M. Moriaz made a gesture of vexation, and walked on to rejoin the carriage, which had gone forward. After taking twenty steps, he stopped, and turning towards Antoinette, who was engaged in pulling her hood down on her shoulders and rebuttoning her twelve-buttoned gloves, said: "I have drawn an unlucky number in the grand lottery of this world. There are no more romantic girls left; the last has fallen to my lot."

"You have said the truth, I *am* a romantic girl," she cried, shaking her pretty curly head with a defiant air, "and if you are wise, you will not urge me to marry, for I am sure to make an unsuitable match."

"Lower your voice," he exclaimed, looking all round, and adding: "thank heaven, only the Albula could hear you."

M. Moriaz was mistaken. If he had raised his eyes, he might have discovered a footpath above the rocky ledge which bordered the high road, and, on this path, a pedestrian, resting under a pine-tree. This traveller had come from Chur by the diligence. On entering the pass, he left his luggage to go on without him to St. Moritz, and alighting with his knapsack on his back, was walking on towards Bergün, where, like M. Moriaz, he purposed passing the night. Of Antoinette's conversation with her father he had only caught the one phrase she had uttered aloud. This phrase had entered his ear like an arrow, and penetrated from his ear to the recesses of his brain, which began to work. This phrase was a treasure, and he continued to ponder over it, comment on it, and extract all its sweetness till he reached the first houses in Bergün: just as a beggar who has picked up a well-lined purse on the dusty road opens it, closes it, and re-opens it, counts over his windfall coin by coin, and adds it up twenty times in succession. On

traveller dined at the table d'hôte; he was so pre-occupied that he ate trout caught in the *Álbula* without noticing that they had a peculiar freshness, flavour and delicacy, and yet it is notorious that the *Álbula* trout are the finest in the world.

Mademoiselle Moiseney, whose profession and occupation was that of chaperone to Mademoiselle Moriaz, was not a great genius; this worthy and excellent person's faculties were very limited, though she was far from being aware of it. Her face was not to M. Moriaz's fancy; he had begged his daughter more than once to dismiss her. Antoinette had always refused, from pure kindness of heart; she did not approve of turning away old servants, old dogs, old horses, and superannuated governesses. Voltaire's *Candide* concluded from all that he saw, that the first degree of happiness was to be Mademoiselle Cunigunde, and the second to see her every day; Mademoiselle Moiseney considered the highest degree of superhuman happiness was to be Mademoiselle Antoinette Moriaz, the next to spend one's life under this queen (who, though slightly wilful, took care to make her subjects happy), and to be able to say: "I hatched the egg that produced this phoenix; I have my share in the prodigy, I taught her English and music." She had a boundless admiration, amounting to idolatry, for her queen. The English profess that "the king can do no wrong;" Mademoiselle Moiseney maintained that Mademoiselle Moriaz could neither do wrong nor make a mistake. She saw everything through her eyes, espoused her likes and dislikes, her sentiments, opinions, rights and wrongs; she lived merely a reflected existence, and this glory sufficed her. She said to her idol every day: "How lovely we are this morning!" almost like the bell-ringer who puffed out his cheeks and cried, "We were in good voice, we chanted the vespers well to-day." M. Moriaz found no difficulty in

excusing her for admiring his daughter ; but he was vexed with her for approving all Antoinette's ideas, decisions, and aversions. "The woman is not a chaperone," he said, "but a note of admiration." He would have been glad to let her retire and to fill her place with a strong-minded, sensible person, who might have acquired some authority. He would have greatly surprised Mademoiselle Moiseney by telling her that she was deficient in sense. The good woman prided herself on possessing a great deal, she had exalted notions of her excellent judgment, and thought herself all but infallible. She discoursed with an oracular air on future contingencies, and piqued herself on divining, foreseeing, and foretelling everything ; she was taken into the secrets of the gods. Her Christian name being Joanne, M. Moriaz, who set little store by the calendar, sometimes called her Pope Joan, which wounded her cruelly.

Mademoiselle Moiseney had two failings : she was fond of eating and she admired handsome men. Do not let us be misunderstood ; she was quite conscious that they were not made for her benefit, that she had nothing to offer them, that they had nothing to give her. Yet she always felt a pleasure in looking at them ; she admired them as simply and innocently as a child may admire a bright coloured print from Epinal, she would have liked to cut their likeness out to hang on a nail and look at next time she read "Gonzalvo of Cordova," and "The Last of the Knights," her two favourite romances. During the dinner at Bergun, her brain had been at work, and she had made two reflections. The first was that the Albula trout are unrivalled, the second that a stranger seated opposite to her had a very fine head ; several times she had forgotten herself and stopped, with her nose and fork upraised, to look at him.

Antoinette, being a little tired, retired early. Mademoiselle Moiseney came to make sure that she had all she wanted,

and as she was leaving the room, candle in hand, asked her, whether she did not think that the stranger had a very remarkable countenance.

"Of whom are you speaking?" replied Antoinette.

"Of the traveller who sat opposite me."

"I must confess that I scarcely looked at him."

"Really! He had splendid eyes, almost green, and as it were shot with golden lights."

"What an advantage! Is his hair green too?"

"Chestnut-brown, almost auburn."

"Come now, is it auburn or not?"

"Don't laugh at me: he has a singular face, but it is full of character and expression, and as handsome as it is strange."

"What enthusiasm! So far as I could see, his head was rather buried between his shoulders."

"What do you say?" cried Mademoiselle Moiseney, horrified. "How can you say, my dear child, that his head was buried in his shoulders?"

"Well, don't fight about it, I am ready to retract. Good night, Mademoiselle—By-the-bye, did you know that M. Camille Langis had returned to Paris?"

"I did not know, but you can tell me nothing. I have guessed it, I was sure of it. And of course you think that he has returned with the intention of——" "I think," broke in Antoinette, "that M. Langis is the man whom it costs me more to pain than any other in the world. I think too that fidelity is sometimes most distressing; as a rule, we lose our dogs occasionally, but never when we wish to be rid of them; I think that a woman makes a bad bargain if she marries a man whose friendship she values; in gaining a husband, she is sure to lose a friend."

"It is quite true! you are always right," cried Mademoiselle Moiseney. "Has M. Langis forgotten you thought him too young? Three and twenty!"

"He has so little forgotten it, that he has contrived, how I don't know, to become five and twenty by this time. How can I withstand such a proof of affection? I shall be obliged to marry him."

"There is no reason, people don't marry out of pity," rejoined Mademoiselle Moiseney.

"Good night, dear," said Antoinette, as she dismissed her, "don't dream too much of your stranger. I assure you he is rather pinched in at the waist; but no matter! If your heart is lost, I will undertake to arrange matters." "How amusing it must be to make matches for others!" she added.

Next morning, Mademoiselle Moiseney made the stranger's acquaintance. Mademoiselle Moriaz wished to make a sketch before leaving Bergün, and had gone out early with her father. Mademoiselle Moiseney went down into the hotel drawing-room, and seeing a piano, she opened it and played a fantasia of Schumann's; she was a fair musician. As she finished the piece, Count Abel Larinski, the green-eyed man, who had entered without her seeing him, came up to thank her for the pleasure she had given him in listening to her; but he ventured to point out that she had not observed the time, an *andantino* ought not to be confounded with an *andante*. At her request, he in his turn sat down to the piano and played the *andantino* like a professional. Mademoiselle Moiseney, ready to be enthusiastic, declared him a Liszt or a Chopin, and begged him to favour her with another piece, to which he readily consented.

After this, they chatted about music and many other things. The green-eyed man was like Socrates in one thing, he was a master in the art of interrogation, and Mademoiselle Moiseney was fond of talking. She liked best to talk about Mademoiselle Antoinette Moriaz, and, when started on this topic, became as eloquent as an auctioneer. At the end

of half an hour, Count Abel was in full possession of Mademoiselle Moriaz's disposition and position. He knew that she had a sterling heart, a mind free from prejudice, a generous soul, a love of everything chivalrous and heroic; he knew that she devoted two days in the week to visiting the poor, and considered them in the light of natural creditors to whom she was bound to make restitution. He knew also that Mademoiselle Moriaz was the better able to gratify her charitable instincts from her mother having left her an income of a hundred thousand francs. He learnt too that she danced perfectly, could draw divinely, read Italian, and speak English. These latter details interested Count Abel but slightly. St. Paul has said: "Though I speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am nothing." The Count was of St. Paul's opinion, and if Mademoiselle Moriaz had neither known how to speak English, nor even how to draw or dance, it would not have diminished the respect he entertained for her. The essential points, in his eyes, were her benevolence to the poor and a slight leaning towards heroes.

When he had learned, in an easy manner, all that he wanted to know, he bowed respectfully to Mademoiselle Moiseney, to whom he did not mention his name, and, without awaiting Antoinette's return, strapped up his knapsack, put it over his shoulders, payed his bill, and set out to climb, by a rapid ascent, the Albula Pass, which leads into the Engadine. It would be difficult to find a sadder, barer, wilder, gloomier, and more indescribably desolate spot in all the Alps than the Albula Pass. The road winds through a frightful chaos of rocks, piled over one another in monstrous disorder. On reaching the summit of the hill, Count Abel felt obliged to take breath. He climbed a hillock and sat down. At his feet opened the yawning mouth of a cavern blocked by some large tufts of darkleaved wolf's-bane; these

tufts of wolf's-bane might have been supposed to be keeping guard over a crime in which they had been accomplices. Abel surveyed the frightful solitude which surrounded him; enormous blocks everywhere, scattered or piled up, some lying on their side, others erect or leaning over. It seemed to him as though these blocks had once played a part in the games of inebriated titans, who, after having used them as bowls or bones, had ended by throwing them at each other's heads. It is more likely that whoever made the Albula Pass, terrified and confused by the hideous appearance of his work, had avenged himself on it by knocking it to pieces with an enormous hammer.

A tinkling of bells reached Count Abel's ears, and he saw a postchaise coming from the Engadine and driving towards Bergün. It was a large open landau, and contained a woman of sixty, accompanied by her servants and her pug. This woman had a rather square head, a flattish nose, high cheek bones, bright eyes and a large^e mouth, on which played a witty, imperious and contemptuous smile. Abel turned pale and shuddered; he kept his eyes fixed on the mongolian face, which he thought he had recognised from afar. He said to himself: "Yes, it is she." He raised his cloak collar up to his face and disappeared as much as is practicable when sitting on the top of a hillock. It was six years since he had seen this woman, and he had promised himself never to see her again; but man is the plaything of circumstances, and both his happiness and pride are at the mercy of a chance meeting. Count Abel was no longer proud; for some minutes he was annihilated and ceased to exist.

Fortunately, he perceived that he had not been recognised, that the woman of sixty was not looking his way. She was a person of taste, and finding the country through which she was passing and which is called the Vallée-du-Diable, very ugly, she had opened a volume bound in morocco, which her

maid had just handed to her. This volume was not a new novel, but a German book called "A History of Civilization from the Evolutionist's point of view, from the most distant ages down to our own time." She had not made much progress in her book, or the history of civilization; she had not reached the stone or bronze age, but was still among the primeval animals, among protozoa, monads, vibrios, bacteria, and leptothrix, in the age of albumen or gelatinous civilization, as it was termed by the author whose views and discrimination charmed her. She never broke off in her reading save to administer from time to time a slight tap on the nose of the pug snoring in her lap, and she was very far from suspecting that Count Abel Larinski was there and looking at her.

He saw the landau pass before him; it did not stop, and was soon rolling down towards Bergün. Then a weight seemed lifted from his heart, and it began to beat freely. The landau was rolling rapidly away, moving at full speed; the count followed it with his best wishes, smoothing the road before it, and removing every pebble that might have slackened its pace. It was about to disappear at a turn in the road, when it passed another post-chaise slowly ascending, in which he saw a red dot; this was Mademoiselle Antoinette Moriaz's hood. The next instant, the landau had vanished; it seemed to him that the phantom of his sad youth, suddenly emerging from the realm of shadows, had departed for ever, and that the fairy of hope, she who holds the secrets of the future, was coming towards him, her head draped with red, flowers in her hands, and sunlight in her eyes. A rift came in the clouds; the shadow brooding over the Vallée-du-Diable lifted, and the awful solitude began to smile. Count Abel rose, picked up his stick, and gave himself a shake. On passing in front of the cavern, he discovered, among the tufts of wolf's-bane which blocked its mouth, a

grassy hollow, and perceived that this hollow was ornamented with some pretty blue flowers, whose bells swung gaily at the will of the wind. He plucked one of them, put it to his mouth, and liked the taste of it. Half an hour after, he left the road to thread a path intersecting some pastures and a larch forest.

Night was falling as he reached the bottom of the valley. He passed through the hamlet of Cresta, crossed a bridge, and found himself at the entrance of the village of Cellerina, twenty-five minutes' distance from St. Moritz. After some deliberation, he resolved to go no further, and entered a clean, pleasant inn, freshly whitewashed.

The air in the Engadinè is so keen that people rarely sleep during the first few nights of their stay. Count Larinski scarcely slept in his new quarters. Would he have slept better in the plain? His thoughts tormented him. What was he thinking of? Of the Cathedral at Chur, the Vallée-du-Diable, the tufts of wolf's-bane, the blue bells, and the meeting of the ascending and descending post-chaises. After that, he saw nothing but a scarlet hood, and his eyes were open when the first rays of morning entered his chamber. Eagles sleep little when they are about to sally forth in quest of prey.

CHAPTER II.

ACCORDING to many people, the baths of St. Moritz are not particularly amusing, and no one is sent to them but those who are suffering seriously from anæmia, and who are really anxious to regain health and strength. The air the invalids breathe and the iron water they drink, which tastes like ink, have wrought more than one real miracle ; but the patient must have strength enough to bear their effects. "I am delighted to have tried them," an invalid once remarked to us, "they did not kill me outright, and this proves that henceforth I can stand anything." This was, however, the outburst of an ungrateful man.

The valley of the Upper Engadine, where St. Moritz lies, has, like the baths, its calumniators and its admirers. This narrow valley, through which the Inn runs, is bare down below, and hemmed in by mountains whose slopes bristle with pinewoods, larches or Alpine cedars, and it lies 5,000 feet above the level of the sea. It occasionally snows there in August, but the fine weather is delicious, and romantic green lakes are to be seen, glittering like emeralds in the sunlight. Those who slander them by comparing them to washing-basins are perverse people, whose ailments will not yield to iron, iodine, or sulphur.

One thing these perverse people cannot gainsay, that it is difficult, not to say impossible, to find on any mountains more flower-strewn and perfumed alps than those of the Engadine. We do not speak of the rhododendron, whose bushes abound

by the edge of the lakes; we care little for this stunted pretentious shrub, whose flowers look as if they were made in wax for the decoration of an altar; but is it not delightful to walk on sward black with the vanilla-scented nigritella? And what do you say to the larger and smaller gentians, to the large yellow arnicas, to the handsome Turk-cap and St. Bruno lilies, to the daphne, to the androsace and its pink tufts, to the red and dark orchis, to all the varieties of saxifrage, to the large hairy campanula, and pretty violet asters muffled in a little cravat to protect them from the cold? Besides, around chasms where the cattle have made tracks and steps, that sort of felty everlasting is to be gathered, which they call the "edelweiss" or cotton-plant of the Alps—an object coveted by every visitor to the baths. Higher up near the glaciers, may be found white pansies, and the alpine anemone and ranunculus; higher yet on the edge of the snow fields, and often buried in the snow, flourishes that charming little lilac blossom, delicately fringed, chilly and shivering, which bears the name of soldanella. Can any discovery in life be more charming than to scratch away the snow and find a flower beneath?

As a set-off to this, we must concede that the one street of St. Moritz is very unlike the Rue de la Paix. We must concede too that the local markets are poorly supplied with provisions, and that while breathing an air stimulating to the appetite the means of satisfying it are not always forthcoming. We cannot have everything, and we are not advising any one to establish himself permanently in the Engadine. Yet there must be some charm in this valley, since its inhabitants emigrate in their youth, and having made money, return to spend their old age in their native district, where they build themselves handsome enough houses.

Mlle. Moriaz did not dislike St. Moritz; she enjoyed the wild scenery and the pine-woods. She liked to look

down from the top of the terrace of the Hotel Badrutt upon the green lake sleeping at her feet, and never thought of complaining that its shape was that of a washing basin. Then she liked seeing the cows returning from their pastures at night in procession. The cow-herd brings back his army in good order, announced from afar by its tinkling bells. Each cow stops of her own accord before the door of her shippen, and lows for admission. When they are turned out in the morning, they wait for the procession to come by when each takes her own place in its ranks. The first time that Mademoiselle Moriaz was present at this ceremony, she thought it quite as interesting as a first performance at the Théâtre Français or the Opera.

There were some rainy days which she spent in reading, painting, and studying the creatures of both sexes whom she met at the table d'hôte. She soon made plenty of work for herself. Her mind and heart were so active, that she could not be in any place for a week without finding some charitable work to be done. A woman keeping a mercer's shop, to whom Antoinette had taken a fancy, introduced her daughter, who was being brought up for a schoolmistress, and wanted to learn drawing. Antoinette undertook to give her lessons. She would have her come to the hotel every day, and kept her several hours. She reproached her pupil with her dulness of comprehension, and occasionally scolded her, but made up for these outbursts by caresses.

The weather cleared, and she took advantage of it to go out walking; she climbed up slopes and stretches of slippery turf, in hopes of finding some rare plants; but her strength not being equal to her spirit, she was unable to ascend to the hollows where the edelweiss grew. The week after her arrival brought her a surprise, and even a degree of emotion, which formed no part of the stated programme of pleasures which the proprietor of the Hotel Badrutt undertakes to provide

for his guests. On returning from an excursion to the lake of Silvaplana, she found in her room a basket containing a regular sheaf of freshly gathered Alpine flowers, and among them not merely a profusion of edelweiss, but some rare plants, and, rarest of all, a certain creeping campanula with an apricot perfume, which, save in some districts of the Engadine, is now found only in Siberia. This splendid bouquet was accompanied by a note which ran thus :

"A man who had had enough of life determined to hang himself. To carry out his design, he had fixed on a sad and solitary spot, where nothing grew but an oak, whose sap was beginning to fail. As he was fastening the cord, a bird perched on the dying tree and began to sing. The man said to himself: Since no place is so gloomy that a bird cannot be found to sing there, I will take courage to live on. And he did live on.

"I came to this valley disgusted with life, sad and weary to death. I saw you pass, and some mysterious influence took possession of me. I shall live.

"What do I care? you will say as you read these lines, and you are right. My sole excuse for having written them is that I am leaving in a few days, that you will never see me, and never know who I am."

Antoinette's first impression was one of profound astonishment; she would have thought there was some mistake, had not her Christian and surname been written in full on the envelope. Her second impulse was to laugh at her adventure. She did full justice to Mademoiselle Moriaz, and was quite aware that she was not like every one else, but she was scarcely prepared to admit that her beauty could work miracles and resurrections, and that a hypochondriac could recover his zest for life simply from seeing her pass. Her curiosity led her to make inquiries; the flowers and letter

had been brought by a little peasant who did not belong to the place, and was not to be found. Antoinette examined the visitors' book, but did not discover in it the same handwriting as the note. She studied the faces around her; there was not one romantic countenance in all the hotel. She soon gave up the search. She liked the bouquet and kept it as a present that had fallen from the sky, the note she laid by as a curiosity, without troubling her head any further about its writer. "Let us talk no more about it, it must have been some madman," she replied one day to Mademoiselle Moisey, who was constantly recurring to the incident, and burning to solve the mystery. The good lady was tempted to stop people on the road and ask: "Was it you?" She might possibly have suspected the Bergün stranger of some share in the matter, had she surmised that he had been at St. Moritz, where she had never come across him. Yet he came there every day, but at his own hours; besides, the hotels were crammed, the courtyard of the hotel belonging to the baths was thronged, and it was easy for him to disappear in the crowd.

To tell the truth, when Count Abel Larinski came to St. Moritz, he devoted less attention to Mademoiselle Antoinette Moriaz than to a certain illustrious chemist. The air of the Engadine and the inky-flavoured water had worked wonders; in a week, M. Moriaz felt another man. He had a formidable appetite, and could walk for hours together without feeling tired. He expended his returning strength in scouring the mountains without a guide, hammer in hand; every day, in spite of his daughter's remonstrances, he pushed his enterprises still further. The more learned people are, the more inquisitive they become, and the more inquisitive they are, they further they can go without feeling fatigue; they only perceive it as they return. M. Moriaz never suspected that in these solitary excursions

he was accompanied from afar by a stranger, whose keen ear and eye watched over him like a guardian angel. The peculiarity of this guardian angel was his willingness to have set him fast in some difficult situation, or pushed him into a bog for the pleasure of pulling him out and bearing him in his arms to the Hotel Badrutt. "Oh, that he would fall into a hole and break his leg!" was Count Abel Larinski's daily wish; but a providence watches over savants. Although M. Moriaz was both rather corpulent and absent-minded, he crossed more than one bog without being engulfed, and more than one swamp without sinking into it.

One morning he took it into his head to climb up to the snowfields which cover the bottom of an amphitheatre, formed by two ridges of rock, above a forest of pine and larch. He was not yet accustomed to a mountainous country, where distances are often deceptive. After drinking three large glasses of iron water and breakfasting heartily, he started, crossed the Inn, and began to ascend through the forest. The hill became steeper and steeper, and the track which he had followed soon ceased. It was not easy to turn back; he went on climbing, clutching at the bushes, brushing away with his feet the treacherous fir-needles which formed a carpet as slippery as ice, making three steps forward and two backward. The perspiration hung on him in large drops; he sat down for a minute to wipe his forehead, and hoped that some wood-cutter might pass by and put him on the path again, if path there were. As no one appeared, he summoned up courage and went on climbing till he came close to a ridge of rocks, in which he vainly sought an opening. He was about to turn, when he remembered having noticed this ridge of reddish rocks from the gallery of the hotel, he thought he remembered also that it formed a kind of spur from the snowfield, and thus concluded that it must

be the last obstacle he had to overcome. It seemed humiliating to come so near his goal and relinquish his purpose. The rock, weather-beaten and worn away by frost, presented clefts and hollows, a kind of natural staircase. Summoning all his powers, and using his nails, he managed to scramble up, and in five minutes reached a kind of terrace, bounded, unluckily, by a wall of granite, perfectly smooth and appallingly high. There was nothing for it but to return by the way he had come; but in perilous places it is easier to ascend than descend; in the one case you can choose your steps, in the other, you must go at random. M. Moriaz could not venture to act at random.

He walked all along the terrace on which he found himself, in hopes of discovering some way down; it was bounded at the end by a torrent, whose muddy waters roared and foamed. The torrent was too wide for a stride, and there was no possibility of wading through it. M. Moriaz, finding his retreat cut off, began to regret his boldness. Seized by intense anxiety, he asked himself whether he were not condemned to end his days in this eyrie; he envied the happiness enjoyed by the inhabitants of the plains, and cast looks of alarm at the cursed wall which kept him a prisoner, and seemed by its gloomy aspect to reproach him for his imprudence. He felt as if the human mind had never invented anything finer than a high road, and was almost prepared to exclaim with Panurge: "Oh, how trebly and quadruply happy are those who plant cabbages!"

Though there was little chance of any one hearing him in this solitude, he shouted again and again, having great difficulty in making his voice heard above the noise of the torrent. Suddenly he thought he heard from below a voice answering him in the distance. He redoubled his shouts, the voice seemed to approach, and presently he saw emerging from the thicket, which clothed the opposite bank

of the stream, a face with a pale complexion and chestnut beard, which he remembered having met in the cathedral at Chur and having again seen at Bergun.

• “You are imprisoned up there, I see, sir,” cried Count Lariniski. “Have patience for a minute and I will be with you.” His countenance beamed with joy; at last he had run down the precious prize he had pursued so long.

Off he bounded with the agility of a chamois. At the end of twenty minutes he reappeared, carrying on his shoulder a long plank which he had torn from a pasture-fence. He threw it over the torrent, steadied it as well as he could, crossed the bridge thus improvised by his genius, and joined M. Moriaz, who was longing to embrace him.

“Mountains are the most treacherous things in the world,” said the Count. “They are haunted by some hobgoblin who plays mischievous tricks on daring people; but all’s well that ends well. Before starting again, you must need some refreshment.” The raw air of these high regions is terribly exhausting to the stomach. I am more prudent than you, and never set out on a voyage without biscuits—How pale you are!” he added, gazing on him with sympathetic and almost affectionate eyes. “Pray put on my overcoat, I will wrap myself in my plaid, and we shall both be warm.”

So saying, he divested himself of his wrap to place it at the service of M. Moriaz, who, feeling half frozen, made but feeble resistance and donned the overcoat, though he had some difficulty in getting his arms through the sleeves.

Meanwhile, Count Abel had thrown down the wallet which he carried slung on his back. He took out a loaf, some hard-boiled eggs, a venison pasty, and a bottle of excellent Burgundy. He spread out the provisions, and then offering M. Moriaz a cup carved from a cocoa-nut shell, filled it up to the brim, saying: “This will do you good.” M.

Moriaz emptied the cup, and soon felt his discomfort vanish. His good humour returned, and he gave his Amphitryon an amusing account of his deplorable *Odyssey*; Abel narrated an adventure of the same kind that had befallen him on the Carpathian mountains. It is easy to take a fancy to a man who has rescued you from a perilous position, who gives you drink when you are thirsty, and food when you are hungry; but if M. Moriaz had not been under great obligations to Count Larinski, he could not have helped acknowledging that this agreeable stranger was a man of good breeding and pleasant conversation.

However, as the meal came to an end, he said; "We are forgetting everything while talking. I am the happy father of a charming daughter with a lively imagination. She will be fancying I am killed, I must go and reassure her at once."

Count Abel gave M. Moriaz his hand to help him to keep his balance while crossing the narrow plank. Throughout the descent he showed him many little attentions, supporting him with his arm at the steepest parts. As soon as they had found the path, they began to converse again. Abel had ideas on every subject, and Socrates' gift for interrogation, as we have said. M. Moriaz was enchanted by the way he put his questions; in his quality of professor at the Collège de France, he felt glad that the man to whom he owed his life was an intelligent one.

As they were traversing a pine wood, they heard a voice hailing them, and were soon joined by a guide, whom Mademoiselle Moriaz, terribly anxious at her father's prolonged absence, had despatched in search of him. They came upon her at the foot of the mountain, accompanied by Mademoiselle Moiseney. - Pale with emotion, her strength failing her, she had seated herself on the edge of a hollow. She was consumed with anguish, fancying that

she saw her father lying half dead at the bottom of a precipice or a crevasse. On catching sight of him, she gave a scream of joy and ran to meet him.

"Well, yes, my dear," he said, "I have been more fortunate than prudent. I must ask my deliverer's name to introduce him to you."

Count Abel seemed not to have heard these last words. He stammered out that M. Moriaz exaggerated the value of the slight service he had been so happy as to render him, and bowing to Antoinette with a cold, dignified, and almost formal air, he took leave, like a man who has no wish to make fresh acquaintances and longs to return to his solitude.

He was already at some distance before M. Moriaz, occupied in telling his daughter his story, bethought him that he had kept his deliverer's overcoat. He felt in the pockets and found a note book and some visiting-cards which bore the name of Count Abel Larinski. Before dinner he had gone round to all the hotels in St. Moritz without being able to discover where M. Larinski was staying. In the course of the evening he learnt it from a peasant who came from Cellerina to fetch the coat.

The worthy Mademoiselle Moiseney was favourably disposed to Count Abel, first because he was handsome, and then because he played the piano so delightfully. She felt sure that Antoinette must be grateful to this excellent musician for having rescued her father; certain of being no longer rebuffed for her enthusiasm, she said to her that same evening, with a smile that she meant to be mischievous:

"Well, my dear, do you still think that Count Larinski's head is buried in his shoulders?"

"It is of little consequence, but I do not retract my opinion."

"Oh, if you could but hear him play one of Schumann's romances! —"

"A charming talent. But in my eyes his chief merit is his capacity for rescuing others."

"Oh, I felt sure, perfectly convinced, that he had a large heart and a good disposition. I understand physiognomy and don't need to see people twice to form my opinion of them."

After a pause she resumed: "May I venture to tell you an idea that has occurred to me, my dear?"

"Tell me, your ideas often amuse me."

"Is it not possible that Count Abel Larinski might be the sender of a certain note and present?"

"Why he sooner than any one else?" returned Antoinette. "I think you wrong him, he looks like a well-bred man, and no well-bred man writes anonymous letters."

"Oh, that one was perfectly innocent, and you may be sure he wrote it in good faith."

"Then you think, Mademoiselle, that a man on the point of slipping a noose round his neck might abandon his design in good faith because he met Mademoiselle Antoinette Moriaz on the high road?"

"Why not?" replied Mademoiselle Moiseney, looking at her with admiring eyes. "Besides, you know that Poles are rather impetuous and apt to be carried away by enthusiasm. Count Larinski may be forgiven for what would be excusable in a Parisian."

"I forgive him on condition that he keeps his promise never to violate his incognito, the first duty of an unknown. He refused to let my father introduce him to me, which is certainly in his favour. If he reconsiders his determination, he is condemned—I am sorry for you, my dear Jeanne," added Antoinette with a laugh. "You are dying to hear one of those songs without words which M. Larinski plays so well, and if M. Larinski be the writer of the letter, his own confession should prevent him from ever

coming into my presence. How will you escape from this dilemma? It is embarrassing."

It was M. Moriaz who undertook to settle this embarrassing matter. Three days later, a few minutes before dinner, he was walking in the courtyard of the hotel, smoking a cigar. He saw Count Abel pass along the road on his way back to Gellerina. The weather was stormy, and a few drops of rain had begun to fall. M. Moriaz ran after the Count and caught him by the button, saying: "You have saved my life, let me save you from the rain. Do me the honour to share our dinner; we will have it served in our own sitting-room."

Abel declined to accept this invitation, and alleged reasons which sounded like mere excuses. The thunder began to growl. M. Moriaz took his man by the arm and dragged him in by main force. He introduced him to his daughter, saying: "Antoinette, here is Count Larinski, a valuable but unsociable man. I have had to use force to get him here."

The Count replied to this speech by a constrained smile. He seemed to feel himself a prisoner; but as he prided himself on good manners and philosophy, bore his imprisonment with a fair grace. During dinner he was grave. He treated Antoinette with rather distant politeness, was attentive to Mademoiselle Moiseney, but reserved his ardour for M. Moriaz. He addressed him by preference, listened to him with great attention, and drank in his words; a professor is always sensible to this species of courtesy. After coffee, Count Abel's reserve thawed. He had been all over the world; he knew the United States and Turkey, New Orleans and Bucharest, San Francisco and Constantinople. He had profited by his travels, he had observed men and things, countries and institutions, manners and laws, natives and travellers, everything indeed, except the women, to

whom he seemed to have had no time to devote; at least they never figured in his conversation. He told some anecdotes well; his melancholy vanished, he had intervals of cheerfulness, and Antoinette could not refrain from mentally comparing his face and conversation to the rather austere landscapes of the Engadine, where lilies, gentians, and lakes are to be found under the shade of black pines among the rocks.

His gravity returned as he replied to a question M. Moriaz had asked about Poland. "Our poor Poland!" he exclaimed. "The Jew is its master now. Active, clever, inventive, and unscrupulous, he lives on our idleness and improvidence; he possesses the great advantage over us of looking forward to the morrow, while we live only for to-day. We despise him, but we cannot do without him. We are always thirsty, and he gives us to drink; we never have any ready money, he lends it us at the rate of fifty per cent; we cannot repay it, and he recoups himself by taking away our furniture, our jewels, our estates and houses. We avenge ourselves on him by insolence, and at times by petty persecutions, and are no readier than our Roumanian neighbours to perceive that the only way to banish the Jew is to rid ourselves of the vices on which he flourishes." Count Abel added, that, for his part, he had no prejudice against the children of Abraham, and quoted the speech of an Austrian writer, who says: "Every country has the Jews it deserves." "And indeed," he continued, "both in England and France, and wherever they are treated on a footing of equality, they become one of the healthiest and most vigorous elements in the nation, while they are the scourge and the leech of the country that persecutes them."

"And that is but justice," exclaimed Mademoiselle Moriaz. The count addressed himself directly to her for the first time, saying:

"What, mademoiselle, you are a woman and love justice?"

"Does that astonish you?" she replied. "Do you think it is a virtue to which we are unaccustomed?"

"A woman whom I know," he returned, "maintained that it would be doing this poor world an ill service to suppress all injustice, since it would suppress charity at the same time."

"I am not of that opinion," said she; "when I give, I feel as if I were making restitution."

"She is a little Socialist," exclaimed her father. "I find that out in January every year, when I make up her accounts, and it is well she puts them into my hands, for she cannot make head nor tail of the balance sheets her banker sends her."

"I am proud for Poland's sake that Mademoiselle Moriaz has a Polish failing," said Abel Larinski, gallantly.

"Is it a failing?" said Antoinette.

"Arithmetic is the first of sciences and the parent of safety," replied M. Moriaz. And turning to the count, he added: "She is a dangerous character; her principles are quite revolutionary, dangerous to public order and the well-being of society. She maintains that those who are devoid of the necessities of life have a right to its luxuries, because otherwise they would have nothing at all."

"That seems to me self-evident," said she.

"For instance," resumed M. Moriaz, "among her protégés there is a certain Mademoiselle Galet or Galard——"

"Galet," said Mademoiselle Moiseney with an air of importance; she had been waiting impatiently for an opportunity of putting in a word.

"This Mademoiselle Léontine Galet, who lives at No. 25 Rue Monfflard——"

"No. 27," again interposed Mademoiselle Moiseney in a positive tone.

"As usual, you are certain, perfectly certain. Well! I was saying that Mademoiselle Galard or Galet, who lives at No. 25 or 27 Rue Mouffetard, was once an artificial flower maker by trade, and is now without a penny. I do not mean to probe the mysteries of her past life; lightly come is lightly gone. What is certain is that Mademoiselle Galard——"

"Galet," said Mademoiselle Moiseney, sharply.

"Is now merely an aged sufferer who deserves the compassion of the charitable. Mademoiselle Moriaz makes her an allowance, to which I have no objection; but Mademoiselle Galet—I beg pardon, Mademoiselle Galard, has retained a love of flowers from her former calling, and throughout the winter Mademoiselle Moriaz sends her every week bouquets costing on an average ten or twelve francs a piece, which seems to me a want of common sense." Last January, she procured some Parma violets for her. I appeal to M. Larinski. Is it reasonable or absurd?"

"It is admirably absurd, and absurdly admirable," replied the count.

"The flowers I give her will never be so lovely as those I had sent me the other day," exclaimed Mademoiselle Moriaz.

She went into the adjoining room to fetch the vase into which she had put her mysterious bouquet, and having brought it, said to the count; "What do you think of it? They are rather faded now, but what remains is lovely still."

He admired the bouquet, but though she looked at him fixedly, she could detect neither embarrassment nor heightened colour on his face. "It is not he," said she to herself. There was a piano in the room where they had dined. As Count Abel was taking leave, Mademoiselle Moiseney begged him to give Mademoiselle Moriaz a specimen of his talent. He frowned slightly, and resumed the gloomy and rather wild air which he had worn on meeting Artoinette at the foot of the mountain. He pleaded the lateness of the hour, but

allowed a promise to be extorted from him to be more compliant the following day.

When he had departed, accompanied by M. Moriaz, who was going to walk part of the way with him: "You see, my dear, that it was not he," cried Antoinette.

"We will admit that I was mistaken," replied Mademoiselle Moiseney with an aggrieved air. "You will at least allow him to be handsome?"

"As handsome as you please. Do you know what I think of when I look at him? A haunted castle. I should like to know what ghosts inhabit it."

In spite of his promise, Count Larinski was three days before he came again, but this time he played whatever they wished. His musical memory was surprising, and his soul was in his finger-tips; he produced marvellous effects from a very mediocere instrument. He sang too; his voice was a rich, mellow, touching baritone. After humming some Roumanian songs, he struck up one of his national airs. He could not finish it, tears came into his eyes, and his voice was choked with emotion. He broke off, offering excuses for being so weak and making himself so ridiculous; but a glance at Mademoiselle Moriaz was enough to convince him that she had not thought him ridiculous.

A Pole who can talk and sing is a valuable resource in a mountainous country, where the evenings are long. M. Moriaz liked music, and there was something he liked still better. When he did not go into society and was not allowed to work, he was inclined to go to sleep after dinner; to rouse himself, he liked to play *bézique* or *écarté*. For want of any one else, he used to play with Mademoiselle Moiseney, but did not enjoy it; he disliked coming into such close contact with Pope Jean's pinched face and yellow ribbons. He proposed a game to Count Larinski, who accepted with the best grace in the world. "The man is ready for anything,"

thought M. Moriaz, and he took a great fancy to him. The result was that Count Abel spent every evening for a week at the Hotel Badrutt.

"Your father is a strange man," said Mademoiselle Moiseney indignantly to Antoinette. "His selfishness is revolting. He appropriates M. Larinski completely. The idea of utilizing a man like that to play *bézique*! He will never come again." But the Count's unsocialibility seemed conquered for ever. He came again.

One evening M. Moriaz was guilty of an indiscretion. As he was taking up a trick, it occurred to him to ask M. Larinski who had taught him the piano.

"I always carry her portrait about with me," was the reply.

And drawing from his pocket a locket, he handed it to M. Moriaz, who, after looking at it, passed it on to his daughter. The locket contained the likeness of a fair-haired, blue-eyed woman, with a small well-chiselled mouth, and a delicate plaintive expression, both sweet and sad; it was the face of an angel, but of an angel that had lived and suffered.

"What a charming face!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Moriaz.

It certainly was charming. Some one has asserted that a Polish woman is a combination of punch and holy water. Yet you may neither care for punch nor holy water, and still be very fond of a Polish woman. She is one of the best chapters in the book of creation.

"The portrait is that of my mother," said Count Larinski.

"Are you so fortunate as still to possess her?" asked Antoinette.

"She was a sensitive plant," he replied; "and sensitive people do not live long."

"So her portrait tells; one can see that she has suffered, but that she has forgiven life its ills."

For the first time, the count laid aside the reserve he

had maintained in his relations with Mademoiselle Antoinette Moriaz. "I cannot tell you," he exclaimed, "how happy your praise of my mother makes me."

Othello was accused of having employed secret philtres and charms to gain Desdemona's affections. Brabantio had only himself to blame; he liked Othello and often invited him to his house, not making him play at *béziq*ue, but questioning him about his past life. The Moor told his story, his sufferings and his adventures, and Desdemona wept. The fathers put the questions, the heroes or adventurers tell the tale, and the daughters weep. This story is as old as the hills. Abel Larinski had left the card-table; he had seated himself in an easy-chair, opposite Mademoiselle Moriaz. He was questioned, and he answered.

There had been nothing easy or pleasant in his lot. He was still very young when his father, Count Witold Larinski, implicated in a plot, was forced to fly from Warsaw. His estates had been confiscated; fortunately, he had some money invested in other countries, and was not left destitute. He was an enterprising man; he emigrated to America with his wife and son, and dreamed of making a name and fortune by cutting through the isthmus of Panama. He went to New Grenada and made surveys and plans, so many, indeed, that he died of yellow fever without having pierced through his isthmus, but having got through all his property, and leaving his widow in the most cruel destitution. Countess Larinski said to her son: "We have nothing left to live on, but is it so necessary to live?" This she said with an angelic smile on her lips.

Abel went to California. There he followed the humblest callings; what did he care whether he were a porter or street-sweeper, provided his mother did not die of hunger? He sent her what little money he earned and lived in privation, making her believe that he had every comfort. Fortune

looked on him more kindly and his circumstances improved. The Countess came to join him at San Francisco; but angels cannot live among gold-diggers, nor breathe with impunity the pestilential air of the country of "placers;" they languish, spread their wings, and fly away. A few weeks after the loss of his mother, in 1863, Count Abel learned through a newspaper which came into his hands, that Poland had just risen again. He was one and twenty. He thought he heard a voice calling him, and another speaking from heaven and saying: "She calls thee, go, it is thy duty." So he went, and within two months he was crossing the frontier of Galicia on his way to join Langiewicz's band.

Othello spoke to Desdemona of caverns, deserts, rocks whose summits reached to heaven, of anthropophagi, of cannibals and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders. Count Abel related to Mademoiselle Moriaz all the fortunes and vicissitudes of partizan warfare, the risks, useless exploits, obscure glories and bloody contests which are never decisive, defeats survived by hope, hunger, thirst, cold, snow stained with blood, and long imprisonments in forests surrounded by the enemy; then the disasters, discouragements, and the fading away of the last hope, punishments, gibbets, with nothing left but a dumb feverish resignation, and the vast solitude with which silence surrounds calamity. After the dispersion of the band whose fates he had followed, he had managed to pass into Roumania.

This exact and precise narration bore the stamp of truth. He unfolded it in a simple and modest manner, not attempting to glorify himself, but losing himself in his subject, and persuasive because he made no effort to be so. His eyes sometimes flashed, his voice faltered and he made sudden pauses; he paused for a word, was indignant with himself for not finding it, but found it at last, and this effort added to the energy of his abrupt and broken eloquence.

He ended by saying: "When a man is young, he feels himself born to roll; the day comes when he wants to sit down. I have sat down now, on a rather hard seat; when I am tempted to complain, I think of my mother and hold my peace."

"What did you do in Roumania?" asked M. Moriaz, who liked stories to be in detail from end to end.

"Oh," said he, "I must beg you to excuse me from giving you a history of the worst spent years of my life. I am my father's son. He dreamed of piercing an isthmus, I wanted to invent a gun. I spent four years in making it, and the first time it was used it burst."

Hereupon he sketched with some humour, and not without quizzing himself, the story of the sad fate of his invention, his hopes, his golden dreams, mortifications and failure.

"One good thing," pursued he, "has happened, which no inventor ever experienced before, I am completely disgusted with my chimera; I defy it to captivate me again. I intend to punish myself for my extravagance. As soon as my course of baths is finished, I shall go to Paris and do penance."

"What penance?" asked M. Moriaz again. "Paris is not a hermitage."

He replied with perfect simplicity, "Nor have I any intention of leading a hermit's life there. I shall give lessons in music and languages."

"Dear me," exclaimed M. Moriaz. "Do you see no other career open to you, my dear count?"

"I am a count no longer," replied he with a manly smile. "Call me plain M. Farinski. Counts do not give lessons at so much per hour."

A dark fire shot from his eyes, and he cried passionately, "I shall give lessons till I again hear the voice which spoke to me in California. It will find me always ready; I shall

answer, 'I am yours, do what you will with me.' Ah, that chimera I shall never renounce."

He seemed suddenly to be awaking from a dream, passed his hand over his forehead, looked around, and said with some confusion:

"Good Heavens! Here have I been talking to you about myself for two hours. It is the most stupid way possible of spending one's time, and I assure you that it shall never happen again."

With these words he rose, took up his hat and left the room.

M. Moriaz paced the room for some moments, with his hands behind his back; then he said:

"That poor fellow is eloquent in his way, he touched my feelings. The one point in his story that I dislike is that gun. A drunkard will go on drinking, and an inventor inventing. No one ever stopped short at his first gun."

"Pray, sir," cried Mademoiselle Moiseney, "could not you ask the Minister for War to adopt the Larinski rifle?"

"What, are you the enemy of your country?" said he. "Do you wish its ruin? Have you sworn that we shall lose Champagne as well as Alsace?"

"I am quite sure," replied she in high dudgeon, "that the Larinski rifle is a masterpiece, and I will answer for the inventor's genius."

"Well, then, Mademoiselle," returned M. Moriaz with a low bow, "if you will give your word of honour, of course you may be sure that the French Government will have no hesitation."

Mademoiselle Moriaz took no part in this conversation. With a slightly contracted brow, buried in her thoughts as in a solitude inaccessible to all mundane sounds, her cheek resting on the palm of her left hand, she held in the right a paper-knife, and kept moving the point backwards and for-

wards in one of the grooves of the table on which she was leaning, while she contemplated, with half-closed eyes, a knot in the mahogany. In this knot she saw the Isthmus of Panama, San Francisco, and the angelic countenance of the Polish lady who had given birth to Count Abel Larinski; she also saw in it fields of snow, ambuscades, retreats more glorious than victories, and, at the end of all, a bursting gun and a breaking heart.

She rose and kissed her father without speaking. In crossing the sitting-room to go to her own chamber, she perceived that M. Larinski had forgotten a book which he had laid on the piano as he entered. It was an octavo edition of Shakespeare, which often accompanied him in his walks. She opened the volume; he had written his name on the first page, and Antoinette recognised the hand-writing of the note.

While she was taking down her hair in her own room, her imagination was wandering through California and Poland. She compared M. Larinski to all the men she knew, and decided that he was like no one else. And this was the man who had written to Mademoiselle Moriaz:

“I came to this valley disgusted with life, sad and weary to death. I saw you pass, and some mysterious influence entered into me. I shall live.”

She felt as if she had been seeking some one for years, and that she had done well to come to the Engadine, since she had found him there.

CHAPTER III.

Two, three, four days elapsed without Count Larinski's reappearing at the Hotel Badrutt, where he was expected each evening. This prolonged absence affected Mademoiselle Moriaz keenly. She sought to explain it; the search occupied part of her days and disturbed her slumbers. She had too much spirit not to keep her chagrin and anxiety to herself. No one about her could suspect that she asked herself more than a hundred times during the twenty-four hours, Why does not he come again? Will he never come again? Has he made a resolve? Does his proud spirit regret having made such disclosures to us? Is he angry with us for having wrested from him by our questions the secret of his life? Or does he possibly suspect me of having discovered the handwriting of the anonymous letter to be his? Will he leave the Engadine without taking leave of us? Perhaps he has left already, and we shall never see him again."

At this thought, Mademoiselle Moriaz felt a sinking at the heart that she had never before known. Her day had come, her heart was no longer free; the bird had suffered itself to be taken captive.

Mademoiselle Moiseney said to her one night: "It seems to me settled that we shall never see Count Larinski again."

She replied in an almost indifferent tone: "No doubt he has found more entertaining society at Cellerina or elsewhere."

"You mean," returned Mademoiselle Moiseney, "that M. Moriaz and bézique have driven him away. Heaven preserve me from saying anything against your father! He has every virtue under the sun, excepting a delicacy of feeling which is not to be learned by handling acids. To compel a Count Larinski to play bézique! There are some things which your father does not, and never will understand."

M. Moriaz had entered the room during this speech: "Be so good as to explain what it is that I do not understand," said he to Mademoiselle Moiseney.

She replied with some embarrassment: "You do not understand, sir, how much we enjoyed certain visits, and how we miss them."

"Don't you think that I miss them too? For the last four days I have been deprived of my game. What can we do? Poles are capricious, and it does not do to trust them."

"It may be simply that M. Larinski has been ill," broke in Antoinette with perfect calmness. "I think, papa, we ought to inquire."

The following day M. Moriaz went over to Cellerina. He brought back word that M. Larinski was making a tour among the mountains, that he had started with the intention of climbing to the summit of the Piz-Morteratsch and attempting the still more difficult ascent of the Piz-Roseg. Mademoiselle Moriaz found it hard to decide whether this news were good or bad; everything depends on the view that we take of things, and her view varied from hour to hour.

M. Moriaz had become more cautious since his misadventure. Experience had taught him that there are treacherous rocks which may be ascended with tolerable ease, but are impossible to descend; there is a risk of ending your days

on them, if no Pole chanced to be at hand. Some truths are irrevocably impressed on the mind, and M. Moriaz no longer ventured amongst the heights unless accompanied by a guide, who had received orders from Antoinette never to leave him and not to allow him to run any risk. One day he was later than usual in returning, and his daughter reproached him rather vehemently with the constant anxiety he caused her. "These glaciers and precipices give me the night-mare," she said.

"Whom have you to blame, my dear?" he replied. "I declare that the ascent I have just made was neither more perilous nor difficult than that of Montmartre or the hill of Sannois. As to the glaciers, I have made a firm resolve never to go upon them; I have passed the age for exploits. My guide has just been thrilling me by an account of the risks he ran in 1864 on the Morteratsch, where he had accompanied Professor Tyndall and another English tourist. They were all carried away by an avalanche, and tied together by one rope, were slipping down with the snow: a fall of twelve hundred feet! They would have been lost if the presence of mind of one of the guides had not succeeded in checking them within two feet of a frightful crevasse which was ready to engulf them. Let those who like ascend the Morteratsch! I am a father, and I am not tired of life. I hope our friend Larinski may come down safe and sound. If he has met with an avalanche on his way, he will invent no more rifles."

Antoinette was no longer able to control her nerves; throughout the evening, she was so pre-occupied that M. Moriaz could not help noticing it, but he was far from suspecting the cause. He was deeply versed in qualitative and quantitative analysis, but was less skilled in the analysis of his daughter's heart. "How pale you are!" he said to her, "Do you feel unwell? You must have taken a

chill. Do make yourself useful, Mademoiselle Moiseney, and prepare her some gruel; you know I don't allow her to be ill."

It was not Mademoiselle Moiseney's gruel which restored Mademoiselle Moriaz's roses. The following morning, as Antoinette was giving her pupil a drawing lesson, Count Abel was announced. She started, the colour mantled in her cheek, and she was unable to conceal her agitation from the keen eye of her audacious charmer. It was easy to see that he had climbed where even eagles rarely ascend. He was weather-beaten by the ice and snow. He had successfully accomplished the double ascent, and had to give an account of it. In descending the Morteratsch, he had been overtaken by a storm which had nearly prevented his ever seeing the plain or Mademoiselle Moriaz again. His safety, he said, was owing to the skill and courage of his guide, whom he could not sufficiently praise.

While he was giving this modest report of his exploit, Antoinette had dismissed her pupil. He seemed embarrassed by the tête-à-tête, which was, however, of his own seeking. He rose to go, saying :

"I am sorry not to have seen M. Moriaz. I came to bid him goodbye, I am going this evening."

She summoned up courage and replied : "It is well you came, you had left this volume of Shakspeare behind you." And then, drawing from her pocket book a paper : "I have something else to return you. I have had the mortification of discovering that it was you who wrote this letter."

With these words she handed to him the anonymous note. His eyes fell, and it was his turn to colour.

"What proves me to be the author of this offence?" he asked.

"Any ill deed may be denied, but do not deny it."

After a moment's silence, he resumed : "I shall not deny

it, for I cannot tell a lie. I am the culprit. I confess it with sorrow, since my audacity has offended you."

"I never cared for madrigals, either in prose or verse, signed or anonymous," she returned rather curtly.

"And you took this letter for a madrigal?" exclaimed he. Then after reading it through, he tore it into pieces and threw them into the fire, adding with a smile: "It is certainly devoid of common sense; the man who wrote it was mad; and I have nothing to say in his defence."

She folded her hands on her breast, and fixing on him her brown eyes, as proud as they were sweet, said; "What then?"

"I came to Chur," he replied, "I entered a church, my eyes fell on a stranger, I forgot myself in gazing at her. In the evening I saw her again, walking in a garden where music was playing, and the sound of the harps and violins seemed to me delightful. I said to myself, 'What is the heart of man? This woman has passed close to me without seeing me, she does not know and will never know of my existence, nor do I know her name. More, I never mean to know it; but I do know that she exists, and it makes me glad, contented, and all but happy. She will always be a stranger to me, still she cannot hinder me from remembering her, and I shall think sometimes of the unknown lady of Chur.'"

"Very good," she observed, "but that does not explain your note."

"We are coming to that," he went on to say. "I was sitting in a coppice by the roadside. I was suffering from gloom and deep dejection; there are moments when life weighs me down like a heavy burden. I was thinking of my vanished hopes, of my perished chimeras, and the sorrows of my youth and my future. You passed along the road, and I said to myself that life was sweet, since it

afforded us the chance of such meetings, and of again seeing what had given us pleasure."

"And the note?" she said again with a dreamy air.

He continued: "I shall never learn wisdom; wisdom lies in doing nothing but what is useful, and I was born with a taste for the useless. The next day I saw you climbing a slope to gather flowers; the slope was steep, and you could not reach them. I went and gathered them for you, and on sending the bouquet was unable to resist the temptation of adding a word. 'Before doing penance,' said I to myself, 'let me commit one folly more, it shall be the last.' One always flatters oneself that it will be the last. The wretched note had hardly left my hands when I regretted it; I would have given a great deal to recover it. I felt its impropriety: I have just pronounced sentence on it by tearing it up. My sole excuse was my firm resolve *never to come near you or make myself known*. Chance has willed otherwise, I was introduced to you, you know by whom and how—it ended in my coming here every evening; but I rebelled against my own weakness, I forced myself away for some days in order to break myself of a dangerous habit, and, thank heaven, I have snapped my chain."

She tapped her foot sharply on the inlaid floor, and said with the air of a queen bringing one of her subjects back to his duty: "Am I to believe you?"

He had spoken in a half-serious, half-jesting tone, tinged by the playful melancholy characteristic of him. His countenance changed, his eye sparkled, and he cried abruptly: "I have regained strength and resolution on the top of the Mörteritsch, and am only come here now to bid you farewell, and assure you that you shall never see me again."

"The affair is altogether strange," replied she *laughingly*; "but I will forgive you only on the condition that you

do not carry out your threat. You have determined to be prudent, and prudent people avoid all extremes. You must remember that you have friends in Paris. My father has many friends there; if we can assist you in any way ——”

He did not allow her to finish, but rejoined proudly: “Many thanks, but I have sworn to put myself under obligations to no one.”

“Well then,” she resumed, “you will at least give us the pleasure of seeing you. In another month we shall be at Cormeilles.”

He shook his head to signify his refusal. She looked at him steadily and said: “It is my wish.”

This look and speech thrilled Count Abel's brain with such joy and hope that he was on the point of betraying himself. He felt ready to fall down at Mademoiselle Moriaz's knees, which would certainly have spoiled all; but he controlled his emotion, bowed gravely and lowered his eyes. She soon resumed her ordinary voice and look to interrogate him about his route. He replied that he thought of travelling by Solothurn, and spending a day there to visit the house in the Gurzelengasse, in which the greatest of Poles, Kosciusko, had died. He had long thought of making this pilgrimage. “Another useless action,” added he. “When shall I learn to correct myself?”

“Don't correct yourself too much,” said she, smiling, and on this he withdrew.

M. Moriaz returned to the hotel towards noon; his guide was engaged elsewhere, so he had only taken a short walk. After lunch, his daughter suggested that they should go down to the edge of the lake together. They walked all round it, which is no great undertaking; this pretty sheet of water, which has been unjustly compared to a shaving dish, is hardly more than three quarters of a mile in length.

When the father and daughter had reached the entrance of the wood which pedestrians traverse on their way to Pontresina, they sat down on the grass at the foot of a larch. For some time both were silent.

Antoinette was looking at the cows feeding, and passing the tip of her parasol over the shining glabrous leaves of a yellow gentian. M. Moriaz was not troubling himself about either cows or gentian, he was thinking of M. Camille Langis. He was reproaching himself on his account; he had not written, having nothing satisfactory to report. He fancied he saw the poor fellow vainly waiting at the Hotel Steinbock. To spend a fortnight at Chur is a penance which the most robust constitution finds hard to stand, and to look every morning and evening for a letter that never comes is an additional penance. M. Moriaz resolved to re-open hostilities, and to begin a fresh assault on the impregnable fortress. He was trying to find an exordium, and an opening phrase. Just as he had found it, Antoinette suddenly said in a low, troubled, but distinct voice: "I have a question to ask. What should you think if I were some day to marry M. Abel Larinski?"

M. Moriaz sprang up, and his stick, falling from his hand, rolled down the slope. He looked at his daughter and exclaimed: "Please to repeat what you have just said. I am afraid I misunderstood you."

She replied, in a firm voice: "I want to know what you would think if I were some day or other to marry Count Larinski."

He was confounded, thunderstruck. He had never foreseen that such an accident might arise, nor suspected that anything of the kind could take place between M. Larinski and his daughter. Of all the ideas unlikely to occur to him, this appeared the least admissible, least probable, and most absurd.

After a long silence, he said to Antoinette: "You are trying to frighten me, you are not in earnest."

"Do you dislike M. Larinski?" she asked.

"No, certainly, I don't dislike him. He is well bred, he talks well, and I grant that he came the other day in the most graceful manner to take me off a rock, where, but for him, I should be still. I am grateful to him, but there is a great step between that gratitude and giving him my daughter. If he asks for a Humane Society's medal, it is at his service."

"Let us talk seriously," said she. "What are your objections?"

"First of all, M. Larinski is a foreigner, and I am suspicious of foreigners. Then I know very little of him and require full references. Then, the state of his affairs, I confess——"

"Ah, there we have it," she broke in. "Poverty is his crime, and he did not disguise it. How differently we think! I have a fortune, and the only advantage I see in it is that it may enable me to marry a man whom I esteem in spite of his poverty."

"Possibly on account of it," interrupted M. Moriaz in his turn. "Come, pray allow my poor common sense to explain its anxiety. M. Larinski told us his life. Well, frankly now, does it not seem to you rather that of—what shall I say—of an adventurer? You object to the word, I retract it at once; but confess that this Pole belongs to the family of—rolling stones."

"Or heroes," she retorted.

"Well, nomadic heroes. I don't wish heroes any harm, though I have not yet been able to discover their precise utility. At any rate, it does not seem to me that they are the men best adapted to ensure a wife's happiness, and I wish my daughter to be happy."

"Do not you share my conviction that M. Larinski's mind is superior, and his heart as sterling as gold?"

"As gold? I should like to believe it, and indeed have no reason for doubting it; but many clever folks are taken in by false jewellery. If you knew more of chemistry, my dear, you would understand how easy it is to manufacture sham ornaments. Formerly, after cleaning the article to be gilt, an amalgam of gold was applied. Now it is usual to plunge the copper or brass ornament into a solution of perchloride of gold and bicarbonate of potassium; in less than a minute, the trick is done. This is called gilding by the dipping process. Galvanism is also used. But let us admit that M. Larinski's heart is true gold. In the purest gold there is always some alloy, and recourse must be had to the cupel. Do you know what this cupel is? A little capsule with porous walls, which has the property of absorbing oxides in fusion, and of retaining the fused metals. What is the proportion of lead and gold in M. Larinski's heart? Neither you nor I know."

She was no longer listening; her chin was resting on her hand, and her eye wandering over the glade. He touched her arm lightly to rouse her, and said: "Is it all over? Do you love him?"

"Why will you oblige me to confess it?" she answered, colouring.

"And has he made a declaration? Has he presumed—"

"Not at all. How little you know him! If you were to offer me to him, his pride would refuse, and I should have to go on my knees to learn the reason of his refusal."

"Let us say at once that he is a marvellous, unique production, and that there is not such another Pole in existence, the mould has been broken. But you are sure he is in love with you?"

She replied by a movement of her head. "I must confess," he resumed, "that passion, '*la grande passion*,' as it

is called, is to me a sealed letter, a mystery of mysteries; I have no idea of what it is. But that did not prevent me from marrying and making a choice which brought me much happiness. Your character is different, and I am inclined to believe that you are yielding to some irresistible fascination. Yet I think it must be possible to resist, you have a firm will and some strength of character——"

She interrupted him by murmuring: "Either this man or none."

"Oh, if that is it," he continued, "you are of age and mistress of your own actions, I can do nothing but submit. But I cling to the idea that it would cost you something to make a marriage of which I disapproved."

"Can you doubt it? I am ready to remain unmarried."

"A bad resolve, worse than the other. Let us come to terms. The absolute has no place except in science. It is absolutely true that borax is a salt formed by a combination of boracic acid and soda. Beyond that, we must keep to deductions. Does this fortunate man suspect the sentiments he inspires?"

"I repeat that you do not know him. Do you take him for a coxcomb? When he came this morning to announce his departure, it was with a fixed intention of bidding us an eternal farewell and never seeing me again."

"An excellent idea of his!" exclaimed M. Moriaz with a sigh. "Unluckily you pointed out that Cormcilles was only two hours from Paris."

"I had some difficulty in convincing him of it."

"Well, after all, you are not yet committed, nothing is fixed. You know, my dear, that my doctor advised me to guard against sudden changes, and not to pass at once from the bracing air of the Engadine to the soft air of the plain. When we leave St. Moritz, we will go two thousand feet lower and spend three weeks at Churwalden, so when we leave here, it

will be a month before we reach Paris. You can spend the time in letting your imagination cool down. It is easy to let ideas grow on one in these out-of-the-way places, without taking the monotony of hotel life into account. The very day after we came, you took a dislike to the paper in our *little sitting-room*, a ridiculous paper, I own. In each square a thrush pecking at a currant; two hundred thrushes and two hundred currants were enough to weary any one to death. Suddenly there came a Pole—"

"It was not the thrush's fault," returned she, smiling. "A month hence, I shall say as I do now; either this man or none."

"Don't repeat your formula, I entreat. Resolutions are the prison of the will and refuse to set it free. Promise me that you will reflect; reflection is an excellent thing. One thing more; will you promise beforehand what I am going to ask?"

"I promise."

"You have a godmother—"

"Ah, here it comes," she said.

"You cannot deny that Madame de Lorey is a woman of the world, full of good sense and experience, who takes a great interest in your happiness—"

"And who has decided from time immemorial that I can only be made happy by marrying her nephew, M. Camille Langis."

"Well, I admit her partiality. That is no reason why we should not send her our Pole. She will examine him and tell us what she thinks, which will furnish an additional element for our discussion."

"Oh, I can hear her from here. This sensible, experienced woman is incapable of recognising any merit in a man impertinent enough to make Mademoiselle de Moriaz fall in love with him without having an income of at least fifty thousand francs to offer her."

"What does that matter? We will let her give her opinion, we are not consulting an oracle; but she can detect sham jewellery. If she were to discover—"

"I should ask for proofs," Antoinette put in promptly.

"And supposing she furnished them?"

She was silent for a minute, and then said: "Well, do as you like."

With these words, the conversation ceased; they rose and walked on to St. Moritz, where M. Moriaz had no sooner arrived than he took a carriage and drove off to Cellerina, armed with a parcel entrusted to him by Antoinette. He found M. Larinski engaged in strapping up his luggage, and awaiting the mail which goes from Samaden to Chur by the Julier Pass.

M. Moriaz expressed his regret at having been absent during his call, and asked if he would consent to undertake a commission for his daughter, who wished to send a sketch of St. Moritz to her godmother, Madame de Lorey.

"With great pleasure," replied Count Abel coldly, and he promised, on reaching Paris, to send the parcel to Maisons-Laffitte.

"Do more," rejoined M. Moriaz, "extend your kindness so far as to take it yourself. Madame de Lorey is a pleasant woman, who will be charmed to make your acquaintance, and to hear of us through you."

The Count bowed with an air of resignation, but with so little eagerness that M. Moriaz asked himself if his daughter had not been dreaming, if M. Larinski had fallen as much in love with her as she fancied. He had not read the anonymous letter, which Antoinette had not cared to show him.

He was half way back to St. Moritz, when he came upon a pedestrian, who, lost in thought, failed to look up and recognise him. M. Moriaz ordered his driver to stop, jumped down, came up to the traveller, seized him by both shoulders,

and said:—"You here 'you again! One can't take a step in the Grisons without coming upon you. I shall ask as I did at Chur, where have you sprung from?"

"And did you think I should stay there for ever?" replied M. Camille Langis with an injured air. "You have not kept your word, you forgot me and never wrote. I was tired of waiting, and here I am."

"And where are you going?"

"To the Hotel Badrutt, to plead my own cause, since my advocate has failed me."

"Ah, you come most opportunely, you have a genius for choosing your time. Go, make haste, plead, groan, weep, pray, you will be well received, and will have a fine report to make to me."

"What do you mean?" replied Camille, "what has happened? Have you spoken and been silenced?"

"No indeed; I was listened to, without enthusiasm, certainly, but with attention, with deference, when all at once--what can we do, my poor friend? This is a sad world, full of accidents and Poles--"

M. Langis looked at him with an air of astonishment as though asking for some explanation. M. Moriaz continued: "Do yourself justice. Come, you are the best fellow in the world, I own; you are an excellent man and a first-rate engineer. Unluckily there is no mystery of blood and tears in your existence, it is perfectly simple, plain, and straightforward and as clear as crystal; in short, you are not an unknown. Have you a fair, delicate, romantic mother, and do you always wear her portrait next your heart? Have you green eyes with unfathomable depths? Have you any adventures to narrate? Have you seen California? Have you swept the streets of San Francisco? Have you exchanged balls with the Cossacks? Have you been nearly killed in three fights and ten skirmishes? You never even thought

of dying once. Have you invented a gun that would kill in any? Have you invented a gun that would kill above all, are you as poor as Job?—What! you do not enjoy any one of these inestimable advantages and yet you have the assurance to ask me for my daughter's hand?"

M. Moriaz ended this speech just as the Samaden mail passed. Count Abel, perched on the top of the coach, bowed and waved his hand.

"Take a good look at that man," said M. Moriaz to Camille, "that is the enemy." And instead of giving him the information he wanted, he said to the young man:—"Forget her and go, it is the best thing you can do."

"You don't know me yet," replied Camille: "I am one of those obstinate fellows who go firing on as long as they have a cartridge left. I shall go with you. Oh! don't be afraid. I can act a part, I can deceive Antoinette, and make her believe that I have given up all my pretensions. I will only pay her a friendly visit: but I pine for a sight of her, and see her I must."

Next morning the enemy alighted at Chur, and went on to Berne. I do not know what prevented him from making the détour by Solothurn, according to the intention he had announced of paying a tribute of homage to the great memory of Kosciusko, but he went direct from Berne to Lausanne, and as soon as he had reached Lausanne, directed his course at once to the casino of Saxon.

As he took his seat at the large green-covered table, his heart beat violently. His ears tingled; his head burned, and cold drops stood on his forehead. He cast wild glances right and left; he fancied he saw in the croupier's eyes his past, his future, and Mademoiselle Moriaz as large as life. Fortune compensated him for her unkindness at Milan. After a night full of vicissitudes and torture, when day dawned, Count Abel had nearly twenty thousand francs in

his pocket. It was sufficient to pay the debts he was anxious to settle, and to allow him to await without too much impatience the moment for carrying out his plans.

He left the casino with a flushed, radiant face; his joy disposed him to pity, and if Herr Guldenthal himself had run across him, he would have been ready to embrace him.

CHAPTER IV.

ALTHOUGH Count Abel had never mentioned the fact to Mademoiselle Moriaz while relating his campaigns and wanderings, he was already well acquainted with Paris, having made several long stays there. This may, perhaps, seem improbable. He had sailed to America when very young, and only crossed the ocean again to go and fight in Poland, and he had since been living in Roumania and Vienna. When had he found time to visit France? Certainly, however, the boulevards were no unknown country to him, and he knew the roads leading to the principal places of amusement; but he was not bent on amusement. Though his purse was well filled, he planned to lead an austere, retired life. He found lodgings to suit him in an *hôtel garni* in the Rue Mont Thabor. These lodgings, on the fifth floor, were agreeable but modest; they consisted of two rooms, looking on to the chestnuts of the Tuileries gardens. The *concerge* was a good-natured woman, with whom Count Abel managed to ingratiate himself the very first day. He was of opinion that in the affairs of this world it is well to have your conscience and your *concerge* on your side.

After installing himself in his attic, his first care was to write to Herr Moses Guldenthal. He sent him word that he

was able to repay him both principal and interest, and commissioned him to discharge some pressing debts which he had left in Vienna; he begged him also to forward his bracelet, which he hoped to turn to advantage. He felt a great relief from the thought that he owed no one anything, and was in a clear, unfettered position. When people are proud, they like to be free, and when they are clever, they foresee every possible conjuncture.

His second care was to go to the Passage de l'Opéra and purchase a sixty frame bouquet, which he carried to No. 27 Rue Mouffetard; he had one of those retentive memories which never forget anything. This bouquet, the finest that Mademoiselle Gulet had ever received, made her stare. She did not know whom to thank, the modest donor having withdrawn from her effusions of gratitude without making himself known. She supposed that Mademoiselle Moriaz had sent it, and, having a talent for composition, wrote a letter of four pages to thank her.

Count Abel had not forgotten that Mademoiselle Moriaz had given him a commission. Some days after his arrival, he determined to go to Maisons, but in a round-about way; he wanted to see Cormeilles and a villa in which he was particularly interested. He took the Argenteuil line, got out at Sannois, climbed the pretty hill which commands the finest views, and halted at the inn of the Moulin de Trouillet to breakfast. It was a delightful morning; it was the middle of August, and the approach of autumn, which embellishes everything, was already felt.

The sky was flecked with little grey clouds; a light silvery haze veiled the brow of the hills; two glimpses were visible of the Seine, sparkling in the sun. Abel breakfasted in the open air; as he was eating, he looked at the expanse of sky and the wide alluvial plain at his feet, covered with vegetables, vines and asparagus, mingled with a few fruit

trees. It is admirably framed by the wooded hills which enclose it. Count Larinski, in his present humour, was charmed with this grand, yet smiling, landscape. He asked himself at intervals the value of an asparagus bed at the gates of Paris, and after making the calculation, turned his poetic eyes towards the heather and broom around him. He came to the conclusion that the hill of Sannois is finer than the Roseg, and this is an opinion that one may hold, without being in love with Mademoiselle Moriaz.

After making a good breakfast, he started again, following the crest of the hill, and threading the woods. On approaching Corneilles, he saw in the distance, rising above an oak plantation, the white walls of a pretty villa. His heart beat quickly, and he said to himself, by a sort of divination: "It must be there." He made inquiries, and found he was not mistaken. Five minutes after, he was standing before an iron gate, through which a verdant lawn was to be seen. At the door of the porter's lodge sat a woman knitting.

"Can you tell me where M. Moriaz lives?" asked Count Larinski.

"This is the house, sir," was her answer; "but M. Moriaz is away and will not be back for a month." She added politely: "If you have come far, sir, you might be glad of a short rest on the terrace. There is a fine view from it."

This hospitable reception seemed to him to augur well; sensible as he was, he believed in presentiments and prognostics. He entered without waiting to be asked twice. After skirting the lawn, he found himself facing two blocks of building, separated by a mass of verdure. On the right was a low wing of some antiquity, consecrated from time immemorial to M. Moriaz's library, collections, and laboratory. On the left, a new two-storeyed house, partly brick and partly stone, built in good, sober taste, without ornament or

pretension, and flanked by a turret over-grown with ivy and clematis, which served as a dove-cote. The house was no palaco, but it spoke of well-being, comfort, and ease. On looking at it, it tempted a man to say, "How pleasant it must be to live here." This was the kind of remark made by Count Abel to himself: he was ready to exclaim, "Bless me! how comfortable I shall be here!"

The situation, the terrace and garden, all pleased him greatly. The air seemed to him fresh and delicious, and the grassy slopes more verdant than any grass he had seen elsewhere, while the flowers in the carefully tended borders exhaled a special perfume.

He noticed a window open on the ground-floor, and went up to it. The room which he looked into, filled with exquisitely chosen knick-knacks, was Mademoiselle Moriaz's boudoir. This little silk-draped sanctuary looked as pure and elegant as the goddess who made it her favourite abode; it had a chaste and virginal appearance. Its windows were open to the fresh breeze and the perfume of the flowers; but it looked as if nothing coarse or doubtful could penetrate it, as if it might not be entered by any malevolent or suspicious being with a secret stain to hide, by any of those travellers who have tramped the high roads of life and brought away some of its mud on their shoes.

Count Abel, strange to say, was smitten with timidity or embarrassment. He felt himself an intruder, turned away his eyes, and retired. This impression was soon dissipated. He recovered all his assurance and walked round the terrace twice, treading the gravel with a triumphant step, and making it feel the full weight of his foot.

Then he sat down on a bench, in the nonchalant attitude of a man quite at home. Five or six pigeons were cooing on the edge of the roof; he felt that they were talking about him and saying, "Here he is, we were expecting him." A

beautiful Angora cat, with a sharp muzzle, silky hair as white as snow, and a bushy tail like a feather, emerged from one of the clumps of shrubs and came up to him. She examined him for a moment with an inquisitive eye, rubbed herself against the seat, and then lay down coquettishly at the intruder's feet. He caressed her, saying, "You are fair and graceful like your mistress, and, like an intelligent animal, you know that I have been with her. Shall I tell you her secret? She is in love with Count Abel Larinski."

With these words he rose and went out, after thanking the lodge-keeper, who would have been greatly astonished had he communicated to her the reflections in which he had just been indulging.

He walked a few paces along the high road; then, finding a road leading to Cormeilles on his right, he took it and soon turned aside into a path winding beneath the trees. He was loth to quit a place where everything spoke so vividly to his heart, and, above all, to his imagination. He sat down on the turf, in the middle of an oak coppice; around him spread a flowery heath. Through an opening in the coppice, he could see Saint-Germain, its forest, and the glittering Seine, on which the two bridges of Maisons-Laffitte cast the shadow of their arches. Through another opening on the left he caught a glimpse of the stately bastions of Mont-Valérien, and on the horizon, Paris, the Arc de l'Etoile, the gilt dome of the Invalides, and the smoke of factories rising slowly into the air: sometimes hanging there straight and motionless, sometimes vanishing under the sway of the wind.

It was a solitary, peaceful, retired spot. The only sound was the song of a lark, interrupted at intervals by the melancholy screech of a peacock. Abel Larinski felt a mysterious emotion seize him, a voluptuous languor flowed through his veins. He gazed on the smoke of Paris and

saw floating in it an ethereal face, ~~had a revelation in a vision~~
hood. This face smiled upon him, and the smile promised
him all the delights of the land of Canaan.

He turned away his eyes and half closed them, and a very different face appeared. It was that of a man whom he knew intimately, and to whom he was closely attached. He buried his face in his hands, and remained motionless for a time. In vain the lark warbled and the peacock shrieked. Abel Larinski heard them no longer. He was thinking of Samuel Brohl, and retracing in his mind the complete history of this Samuel, who had never had any secrets from him.

This history was as sad as that of Abel Larinski, but much less brilliant and heroic. Samuel Brohl did not pride himself on being a patriot or a paladin; he had had no noble woman with an angelic smile for his mother, and had never thought of fighting for anything or any one.

He was not a Pole, though born in a Polish province of the Austrian Empire. His father was a Jew of German origin, as indicated by his name, which in German means a swamp, a bog, or some such place in which people sink, and he kept a tavern in a wretched little town near the eastern frontier of Galicia;—town, tavern, and host were alike wretched. Though he took much pains to sell his neighbours adulterated brandy, and to watch for every opportunity of lending them money at twenty per cent, it availed him little; he was chicken-hearted, and they profited by his fears to make him disgorge. His creed consisted of three articles; he held that the arts of lying well, stealing well, and receiving a smack on the face without appearing to notice it, were the arts useful above all others in human life; but of the three, the last was the only one he had a talent for practising. His intentions were excellent, but his intelligence defective; this arrant knave was but a peddling rascal, and could be duped like a simpleton.

Abel Larinski suffered his thoughts to transport him to the tavern in which Samuel Brohl had passed his early years, and which he knew as well as if he had lived there himself. He could fancy he saw the grimy room, smelling of garlic and tallow, with men sitting drinking round a long table, and others lying under it, the damp, reeking walls, and dirty, uneven floor. He remembered a wooden panel, against which, in the heat of a dispute, a bottle had been thrown; it had left a large wine stain, which bore some resemblance to a face. He also remembered the tavern-keeper, a little man with a dirty red beard, and a mean expression of countenance, a combination of impudence and timidity. He could see him coming, going, turning, and suddenly stopping to raise the edge of his caftan and rub his cheek. What had happened? An insolvent debtor had spit in his face; he was wiping it with a smile. This smile seemed to Count Abel more terrible than the large stain which looked like a face.

"Children ought to be allowed to choose their fathers," he thought. "And yet this poor Samuel Brohl narrowly escaped living as happily and contentedly in the paternal mire as a fish in water. Habit and practice accustom people by degrees to filth; there are even people who eat and digest it. What put it into Samuel Brohl's head to read Shakespeare? Poets are poisoners."

It was indeed a fact that Samuel had somewhere picked up a volume that had fallen from a traveller's pocket. It was a German translation of the "Merchant of Venice." He read it without understanding it; he read it again and understood it at length. His ideas became terribly confused, and he felt as if he should go mad. By degrees, order was restored to the chaos, and light was slowly diffused. Samuel Brohl felt as if he had had cataract on his eyes, and it had been removed.

He saw things that he had never seen before, and felt joy mingled with dread. He learned the "Merchant of Venice" by heart. He shut himself up in a garret to exclaim with Shylock, "Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?" He repeated too with Lorenzo :

"Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold :
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins ;
Such harmony is in immortal souls ;
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."

Samuel rose sometimes in the night to look at the heavens, and fancied he heard the voices of the young-eyed cherubins. He dreamed of a world where Portias and Jessicas were to be found, of a world where the Jews were proud like Shylock, insolent like Shylock, vindictive like Shylock, and like Shylock, avenged themselves on their enemies by eating their hearts. The poor fool dreamed too that there was in him, in the head or breast of Samuel Brohl, an immortal soul, and that this soul made harmony, but he could not hear it because it was closed in by such thick, coarse mud.

Then he felt a horror of Galicia, of its taverns and tavern-keepers, and of Samuel Brohl himself. An old schoolmaster, who had a harpsichord, taught him to play it, and thought he was doing him a kindness by lending him books.

One day, Samuel Brohl modestly informed his father of the desire that had come over him to go to the grammar-school at Lemberg to learn all the various things he wanted to know. It was then that he received from the paternal

hand a tremendous cuff which made him see all the stars in broad daylight. Old Jeremiah Brohl had taken a dislike to his son Samuel Brohl, because he thought he read something in his eyes which seemed to say that Samuel Brohl despised his father.

"Poor fellow!" murmured Count Abel, picking up a stone and tossing it in his hand. "Fortune owed him some compensation, she treated him harshly to the end. He jumped from the frying-pan into the fire, he changed his servitude for a worse bondage. When he came forth from the land of Egypt, he thought he saw the palms, of the promised land. Alas! he soon regretted Egypt and Pharaoh—Why was not the woman a Portia? Why was she neither young nor beautiful? Old fairy," added he, "how you made him suffer!"

Count Larinski felt as if this woman, the fairy who had made Samuel Brohl suffer so much, was there before him, and was looking down on him, as a fairy, old or young, may look down on a worm. On her lips there played an imperious and contemptuous smile, the smile of a Czarina; such was the smile of Catherine II. when she was displeased with Potemkin and said: "I have made him what he is, and can unmake him." "It is she, it must be she," thought Count Larinski. "I cannot doubt it. I saw her again, five weeks ago, in the Vallee-du-Diable; she terrified me."

This woman who had rescued Samuel Brohl from the land of Egypt, and shown him an immense amount of kindness, was a Russian princess. She had an estate in Podolia, and fate decreed that she should one day pass through the wretched town where young Samuel was growing up under the shadow of the tabernacle, and halt there. He was sixteen; in spite of his filthy rags, she was struck by his face. She was a clever woman and had no prejudices. "If he were washed," thought she, "if he were scrubbed in

plenty of fresh water and had new clothes; when he had laid aside his native impurity, seen the world, and mixed with decent people, he would really be a handsome boy." She drew him into conversation and found him intelligent; she liked intelligent people. She made him sing and ascertained that he had a voice; she was devoted to music.

She questioned him, he told her his troubles; and, while he was speaking, she said to herself: "No, I am not deceived, he has a future before him, and will be a splendid fellow in two or three years. Three years is not long; gardeners who graft wild stocks have often to wait longer."

As soon as he had finished his story, she told him that she was in want of a secretary, that she had had several, but soon tired of them because they had not the qualities she required; she asked him whether he felt that he could fill the post. He only replied by pointing to his father, who was smoking his pipe on his doorstep. Another minute and she and Jeremiah Brohl were closeted together.

She offered at once to buy his son, and his hands sank to his side with astonishment, and then he felt flattered and delighted. First he declared that his son was not for sale, and then insinuated that if ever he sold him, it would be at a high price; he talked of him as a rare commodity, a choice and valuable article. He set a ridiculous price on him; she protested, he maintained that he could make no reduction, he had his tariff and never lowered his prices. There was a long discussion, and she was about to break off the negotiation, when he reduced his demands, and they at length came to an agreement. She sent for Samuel and said to him: "You are mine, my lad, I have paid down the money for you. You ratify the bargain, don't you?"

He was stupified by learning that he had a commercial value, he had never thought of such a thing. He longed to know how much he was worth, but the princess kept her

own counsel, wishing him to believe that he had cost her a fortune. Upon reflection, he made his conditions; he wanted to be his own master for three years, that he might study and satisfy his craving for knowledge on many subjects.

She readily consented, it suited her purpose; the fruit would take quite three years to ripen and become worthy to be served at a princely table. She gave him directions and counsels, all of which bore the stamp of a superior mind; she understood the world, politics, and physiology, in short, everything that can be learnt, and everything that ought not to be learnt. And so Samuel Brohl went with a well stocked purse to the University of Prague, which he soon quitted for Heidelberg, going thence to Bonn, Berlin, and Paris. He was a restless spirit, not knowing exactly what he wanted; but wherever he went, he cultivated quavers, sharps, and flats; it was part of the contract.

The princess herself was a great traveller; two or three times a year she came to see Samuel Brohl. She questioned and examined him, feeling him, as people feel a peach to ascertain how soon it will be ripe. Samuel was very happy; he was free, he enjoyed life and did as he liked. There was but one flaw in his happiness; when he looked at himself in the glass, he sometimes said: "This is the face of a man who has sold himself, and the woman who has bought him is neither young nor handsome."

He repeatedly formed the project of learning some trade that might enable him to repay his debt and put an end to the bargain. But he never carried it out; he was both very idle and very ambitious. He wanted to find a royal road, he had a horror of beginnings and apprenticeships. His early education had been so much neglected that he would have had to work hard to make up for lost time.

Some one has said: "I mistrust people who have not

begin by drawing noses." Samuel had never drawn noses, and this was evident when he painted his frescoes. And then, though his intelligence was keen and he had a marvellous faculty for entering into the thoughts of others, his mind was limited; he had neither original ideas nor strength of character. He possessed a collection of semi-talents; even in music, he was unable to invent, and when he attempted to compose, his inspirations were but reminiscences.

He did himself justice; he felt that it was in vain to strive, his semi-talents would never give him a first place, and a second he disdained. His grand defect was a want of that will, which is the making of a man. He was tempted to spring from his horse which was carrying him forward against his will; he saw that his feet were caught and held fast by the stirrups, he had not the strength to free himself and remained in the saddle. As he could not be a great man, he abandoned himself to his destiny, which condemned him to be merely a rogue. On the reckoning day he declared himself solvent, and the princess took possession of her bargain.

"Yes, poets are poisoners," thought Count Abel Larinski. "If Samuel Brohl had never read the 'Merchant of Venice,' nor 'Egmont, a tragedy in five acts,' nor Schiller's 'Ballads,' he might have resigned himself to his new position; he would have seen its good side, he would have eaten and drank his shame easily, without being disturbed; but he had read the poets, he felt disgust and nausea, his stomach rose. He longed to escape, and the princess suspected it. She kept him in her sight, she kept him short of money, only paying him crown by crown the quarterly instalments of his scanty allowance; she said to herself: 'So long as he has nothing, he cannot escape.'

"But she was mistaken, he contrived to escape, and was so afraid of being recaptured, that, for some time, he hid himself like a criminal from the police. He was constantly

fancying that the woman was at his heels. It was then for the first time that he made acquaintance with hunger, for in the land of Egypt there had been food. He lived on his wits and cursed the poets.

"One day he learned that his father was dead, and hastened to secure his inheritance. He did not know that old Jeremiah Brohl had been in his dotage for the last two years, and that his debtors had mocked him by devouring his substance. He came in for a fine property truly, two or three *crazy chairs*, four cracked walls that could scarcely stand upright, and some jewels concealed in a secret hiding place which he knew of. Old Jeremiah not having been able to dispose of these at the price he asked, had preferred keeping them to selling them at a reduction. He had his principles, which was fortunate for Samuel, who found these jewels very useful. He disposed of a necklace, and went to Bucharest, where some one had assured him there was a fortune to be made.

"There he gave music lessons; this stupid occupation was very uncongenial to him, he disliked the dependence and regular hours. His male pupils wearied him to death, he would have liked to wring their necks; his female pupils treated him like a dog, they never thought of his being handsome, because they suspected him of being a Jew. What was he to do in Bucharest, a city where all the Germans are Jews, and Jews are not men! Although he was earning a little money, melancholy preyed upon him, and at length one day he seriously thought of committing suicide."

Count Abel Lariński stooped and plucked a sprig of heather, he tickled his lips with it and began to laugh; then striking his breast, he said half aloud: "Thank heaven, Samuel Brohl is not dead, for here he is."

It was true, Samuel Brohl was not dead, and had taken much more kindly to life since he had met Mademoiselle

Antoinette Moriaz in the Cathedral at Chur. It was Samuel Brohl who had come to Corneilles, and was sitting at that moment in the midst of an oak coppice. Possibly the lark, which he had heard singing a quarter of an hour before, had recognised him, for she had ceased her song. The peacock went on screaming, and his doleful cry sounded like a warning. Yes, the man sitting on the heather and engaged in telling himself his own story was Samuel Brohl; the proof of this is that he had laughed, and that Samuel Brohl sometimes laughed, whereas Count Abel Larinski never laughed, and what is more, had not been alive for the last four years: the latter reason is perhaps the better one.

The man who, with or without his leave, we shall henceforth call Samuel Brohl, reproached himself with his fit of gaiety as he would have reproached himself with a false note that might have escaped him in performing one of Mozart's sonatas. He resumed his grave and dignified air to greet a phantom which had suddenly risen before him. It was the same that he had addressed one evening at the Steinbock Hotel, when he treated him as a crazy fellow, a visionary, and even a fool; but this time he gave him a more indulgent and gracious reception. He did not wish to speak to him harshly, he felt kindly disposed towards him, he was under great obligations to him, and Samuel Brohl was not ungrateful.

"Ah, yes, my poor friend, here I am," said he, addressing him in the mute language understood by phantoms. "I have assumed your place and almost your appearance, I play your part in this Vanity Fair, and though your noble corpse has been lying six feet below ground for the last four years, yet, thanks to me, you are still alive. I always felt the sincerest admiration for you; I looked on you as a phenomenon, a prodigy. You were courage, devotion, and generosity itself; you thought more of honour than all the gold mines of California, you hated every mean thought, and

every questionable action; your mother had reared you in every sublime folly, you were a true knight, a genuine Pole, the last Don Quixote in this age of sceptics, plunderers and interlopers.

"Blessings on the fate which brought us together! You were living a retired, solitary, obscure life in a miserable hovel in one of the suburbs of Bucharest. Such is the way of the world; you, who had nothing to conceal from men or God, and deserved a crown, were in hiding. Alas! the Russian government had the bad taste to fail to appreciate your exploits, and you were afraid of its reclaiming you, and your being delivered up. From our first meeting, you took a fancy to me, and honoured me with your friendship: I spoke Polish, and you were fond of music. I became your intimate friend, your one companion, your confidant. You will allow that to me you owed the last happy moments of your brief existence. I was soon acquainted with your birth, your youth, your enterprises and misfortunes. You initiated me also into the grand invention you had just perfected, and explained to me in detail the mechanism of your celebrated rifle. I was intelligent, I understood, or thought I understood it. This rifle, said you, would make my fortune some day, for you had given up all hopes for yourself; you had a heart complaint, and knew yourself doomed to an early death. My imagination caught fire. At my request, you made up your mind to start with me for Vienna. This expedition was to be fatal to you, but I swear that I never suspected it."

Samuel folded his hands over his knees, and continued: "May my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, may my blood curdle in my veins, may the marrow of my humiliated bones be dried up, if ever I forget the gratitude I owe you, Abel Lariński, and the wretched little town in which we spent the first night of our journey! You were choking,

and had only time to awake me and call me. I came to your side ; with your dying voice you gave me your last instructions. You put into my hands the last thousand florins you had left, which were as acceptable to me as an orange would have been to the shipwrecked crew of the Medusa ; then, pointing to a trunk containing your family relics, your letters, diary, and papers, you said : ‘Destroy all those, Poland is dead, and let no one remember that I have ever lived.’ And then you breathed your last. Well, I disobeyed you, I confess. I kept your mother’s portrait, your papers, and everything, and when I gave notice of your death to the authorities, I made them believe that the dead man was Samuel Brohl, and that Count Larinski was still living.

“Do you blame me? the temptation was too great. Samuel Brohl’s antecedents were irritating, he was of mean birth and had been sold ; there was a stain on his past history which he could not remove, and, having been so unlucky as to read the poets, he sometimes despised himself. It was high time to bury him, and I was delighted to know him dead and to feel myself alive.

“As soon as I had succeeded in persuading myself that I was really Count Abel Larinski, I was as happy as a child who has just been decked out by its parents, and sees itself walking in its new clothes. With your name, I acquired a noble history ; I revelled in the past, I explored its every nook and corner with all the curiosity and pleasure of a poor devil going round the park he has just inherited. You bequeathed me your parents, your adventures, your exploits. When you fought for your country, I was there ; when you were wounded near Dubno, it was my flesh that was pierced by the ball.

‘Have you anything to complain of? Is not all common property between friends? I left my own skin and entered

yours ; it fits me, and I mean to keep it. I resemble you perfectly by this time ; I assure you that if we could be seen together, it would be hard to distinguish one from the other. I have acquired your habits, your manners, your language, your way of carrying your head, your melancholy gaiety, your pride, your sentiments, everything, down to the colour of your hair, and your handwriting. I am become Abel Larinski ; I mistake, I am more of a Pole, more of a Larinski than yourself."

At this moment, Samuel Brohl's face wore a strange expression, his gaze was almost fixed. He had ceased to belong to this world, he was communing with a spirit ; but he was not awed or solemn, like Hamlet conversing with his father's ghost. He treated the ghost of the true Abel Larinski with familiarity, just as you would treat a partner *working with you in the same firm*, to whom you must show your balance-sheet.

"It may well be said, my dear Abel," he continued, "that the principle of association works wonders ; man is so powerless alone ! But, of all partnerships, that which we two have formed is the most useful and convenient. A living and a dead man can render each other great services, and can have no differences. You ought to be content, you play the principal part and sign for the firm. We will not mention your rifle again ; it was a bad speculation which I have had some difficulty in overlooking. It was your imaginative brain that led us so far astray, but, thank heaven, we are on the right track now.

"Five weeks since, we met a woman, and such a woman ! She has soft brown eyes, from which her glances gush like fresh sparkling water. Worthily to sing her graces, we must borrow the words of the Canticles. 'Her lips drop as the honey-comb, her stature is like a palm-tree, and the smell of her garments is like the smell of Lebanon. There

is no spot in her; she is a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed.' She will cry one day like the Shulamite: 'Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.'

"She is ours, dear Lariuski, my dear partner; she has surrendered, and you and I both share the honour of the victory. I showed her my face and she did not object to it, and I told her your story, as you would have told it yourself, with delicacy and simplicity, without any additions or omissions. Her heart was touched and she gave it away. You shall marry her, she shall bear your name; but you shall be married by proxy, and I will represent you. I promise always to regard myself as your representative, or rather, the property shall be yours, and I will have the enjoyment of it. Never fear lest I should forget what I owe you and the modesty befitting my position."

With these words, he waved his hand, as if to dismiss the phantom he had evoked, and it fled quivering with grief, shame, and indignation. The peacock gave a fresh scream, a doleful shriek. "Stupid creature!" thought Samuel Brohl, with a shudder.

He looked at his watch, and saw that the time had gone on; some of it had been lost in talking to ghosts. He rose at once, and walked on towards Cormeilles, thence to reach, by an open road, the banks of the Seine and Sartrouville, the spire of whose belfry he could see.

When he had descended the ridge, he looked back and saw on the top of the hill, in a gap left by the tortuous branches of two plane-trees, a white wall shining amidst the greenery, and a little above it the pointed roof of the dove-cote in which Mademoiselle Moriaz's pigeons were roosting. He threw an ardent kiss into the air; the kiss was meant for both pigeons and dove-cote, the house as well as the woman, the woman as well as the house.

For the first time in his life, Samuel Brohl was in love;

but Samuel Brohls do not love after the same fashion as Abel Larinskis. When they adore a woman, beautiful as the picture may be, they like the frame, provided it be rich enough, quite as much as the portrait, and their object is to possess their mistress with all her surroundings and belongings.

CHAPTER V.

MADAME DE LORCY was a woman of about fifty, with some remains of beauty. She had been a widow for many a year and had never thought of marrying again. Though she had been happy in her married life, she considered liberty the first of blessings, and made an irreproachable use of hers. She had a good head, knew more about figures than finery, and administered her own fortune, which was no trifle. Liking to employ her time well, she managed to spare some to devote to the affairs of others. She had a vocation for the profession of consulting counsel. Her advice was generally sensible and judicious, and her friends could not do better than follow it; her clients merely complained that she was inexorable, that she issued her decrees without much consideration for those concerned, and permitted no appeal from them. She was kind and charitable, but not very susceptible, and showed little tenderness for her neighbours' delusions.

A German poet, in distributing his wishes for the new year, wished the rich a little feeling, the poor a piece of bread, women lovely dresses, men a little patience, fools a little sense, and sensible people a little poetry. Madame de Lorcy had some feeling, lovely dresses, and plenty of sense; but her sense lacked a touch of poetry, and the poets whom she counselled needed a great deal of patience to hear her to the

end. Those who dared to neglect her advice and make themselves happy in their own way incurred her displeasure for ever; she maintained stoutly that their pretended bliss was all a sham, that they had tied a weight round their necks, that at the bottom of their hearts, without showing it, they were repenting heartily, and she added: "It is not my fault, I told you so, but—you would not believe me."

Madame de Lorey felt an almost maternal affection for her nephew, M. Camille Langis; when he confided to her his attachment, she promised that he should marry Mademoiselle Antoinette Moriaz. He was certainly rather young; but she had decided that his age was a trifling matter, and that in everything else the two were perfectly matched. M. Langis had hesitated some time before making his proposal; he said to Madame de Lorey: "If she refuses me, I shall not be able to see her again, and so long as I can see her I am but half wretched."

It was Madame de Lorey who had thrust his sword into his hand and forced him to open the campaign in which she was to act as his second. The campaign had been unsuccessful. Greatly ruffled by Mademoiselle Moriaz's refusal, after vainly bantering, attacking, and entreating her, she was on the point of quarrelling with her. To appease her, the sentence was declared not to be final, or at least the condemned man was allowed to lodge an appeal. M. Langis had gone to Hungary and had now returned. Antoinette had refused two suitors in the interval, which made Madame de Lorey augur favourably for her project. Thus she felt thwarted and irritated on receiving the following letter from M. Moriaz:—

"Dear Madame,—You will be delighted to hear how well I am. My cheeks are plump, and my complexion rosy, I have the legs of a chamois and the appetite of an ogre. Should you ever be troubled with anæmia, which heaven for-

bid, go to St. Moritz and you will have wonders to report. After three days, you will think of nothing but eating; that is the general occupation here. I no longer eat, I devour; dinner hardly ever comes without my asking for more. I am a terror to my neighbours, they watch every movement of my knife with anxiety; they seem to be asking: 'Are we safe? Will his second help suffice him?' In short, dear madame, all goes well, and I am happy, very happy, and yet I am not. You will ask me why; how shall I answer?

"St. Moritz is a place, where people find what they seek, but sometimes also what they do not seek. I am not speaking of bears, I have seen none, and if I did meet one, I feel as if I had strength enough to strangle it. Besides, bears are quiet creatures who don't relate their history, and the only creatures I dread are those who tell theirs without our being allowed to strangle them. I say no more; have I made myself understood? You are so intelligent!

"By the way, Antoinette is sending you a pencil or water-colour sketch, I know not which, by the hands of Count Abel Larinski. He is a Pole, as you may be sure, you will discover that at once. I am much indebted to him; he was good enough to rescue me from a break neck place in which I had been so foolish as to imprison myself. If I have still a pair of legs to run on and a pair of hands to write with, I owe them to him. I commend him to your kindness, and beg you will make him tell you his story. He is ready to tell it, not every day, certainly; but if you touch the right spring, off he goes and nothing can stop him.

"Seriously, M. Larinski is no common man, and you will be pleased to make his acquaintance. I have discovered that he is in somewhat straitened circumstances. He is the son of an exile whose estates have been confiscated. His father was a sort of madman, who set his heart on cutting through the isthmus of Panama and found himself with nothing to

cut. He himself was making money at San Francisco ; but in 1863 he left everything to go and fight against the Russians. This exalted patriot has since pursued the profession of an inventor without success, and is now in search of some means of earning his living.

"Don't think that he is going to ask for anything, he is an *hidalgo*, and drapes himself as proudly in his poverty as a Castilian in his cloak. I am interested in him, I wish to help him and give him a lift ; but I wish first to make sure that he is really worthy of my sympathy. Study him closely ; sift him well. I have more confidence in your eyes than my own, I think you a mistress in the art of discrimination.

"Antoinette desires to be most affectionately remembered to you. She is delighted with St. Moritz, she seems to have found something in it to charm her. For my part, pleased as I am to have regained my appetite, sleep, and everything else, I regret that we came here ; reconcile these statements of mine. Send me word as soon as you can what you think of my Pole ; but oblige me by not condemning him till you have heard him. Don't make up your mind beforehand, I entreat ; an expert is bound to be on his guard against prejudices and to weigh his judgments as well as his words."

Madame de Lorey answered as follows, by return of post :

"You are a child, my dear professor, and your artifices transparent ; I understand you only too well. Has she carried her madness to this pitch ? I thought it was in her ; but she has astonished me and gone further than I expected. You may tell her so from me, or rather do not tell her ; I am only speaking to you, for I am too angry with her to attempt to bring her to reason. I will see your Pole, I shall await him without flinching ; but in reality I have seen him already ; I know him, know him by heart ; he is some impostor, you may be sure. I shall examine him without

prejudice, with the strictest impartiality. It is kind of you to remind me that an expert ought to suspend judgment. I shall bring my little police force into the field, and you shall soon learn what I think of your adventurer. Yes, indeed I pity you, poor man! But after all, it is your own doing; is it my fault if you did not know how to proceed? God bless you!"

At the very hour when Samuel Brohl, sitting on the heather in the midst of an oak coppice, was conversing with phantoms, Madame de Lorey, alone in her drawing-room, was occupied in working tapestry and pursuing her thoughts, which revolved in a circle like circus horses. She had been expecting Count Larinski's call for several days, she was surprised at his showing so little eagerness, and suspected him of being afraid of her, a suspicion which pleased her. Again and again she thought that she heard a man's step in the ante-chamber, and gave a nervous start, making her pink cap ribbons flutter on her shoulders.

Suddenly, as with head bent down she was counting her stitches, some one who had just entered without her seeing him took her hand, kissed it affectionately, and then, flinging his hat on a table, threw himself into a chair, where he remained motionless with outstretched legs and eyes fixed on the ground.

"What, is it you, Camille?" exclaimed Madame de Lorey. "Your arrival is very opportune. Well?"

"Well? Well, indeed, madame," replied M. Langis, "you see before you the most miserable of men. Why is your pond dry? I should have thrown myself in head foremost."

Madame de Lorey laid down her embroidery; then folding her arms, "Have you come from the Engadine?" she resumed.

"Would that I had never gone there! It is a country where poison is sold, and I have drunk of it."

"Never mind metaphors. You saw her? What did you say to her?"

"Nothing, madame, nothing of what was in my heart. I made her believe that I had reflected and changed my mind, that my foolish passion for her was thoroughly cured, and that I was simply paying her a friendly or casual visit. Yes, madame, I spent half a day in her company, and during the whole time I never once betrayed myself, but persuaded her that my mask was my face. Now tell me if you ever read a more heroic trait in Plutarch's Lives?"

"And what did she say to you?"

"She was so enchanted and delighted at the change in me, that she longed to embrace me."

"She shall pay for it. And did you see *him*?"

"I had a glimpse, looking up at him, as became the humility of my condition. This glorious and favoured mortal was perched on the top of a coach."

"Is he really very attractive?"

"It seems that his eyes have unfathomable depths, and he bears his exploits written on his forehead. Who am I that I should compete with him? You will own, madame, that I have the face of a school-boy. And yet, if I chose to boast—You may imagine that the road I undertook to make in Transylvania was not an easy one to construct. We cut it through the solid rock, working in the air, suspended by ropes. The perilous task disheartened our workmen, some left me; to encourage the others, I had myself similarly fastened and plied the pickaxe with them. One day, when a mine was fired, a stone splinter struck one of my men's ropes with such violence that it cut it in two as clean as a razor. The man fell, and I thought him lost. By a miracle, his clothes caught in some bushes to which he managed to cling. I was the one to go to his rescue; and I can assure you that in saving him I proved the strength of my muscles, and was

twenty times in danger of breaking my neck. My workmen had mistrusted my youth, but from that day forward, I can tell you, they respected me."

"Did you relate this incident to Antoinette?"

"Where, may I ask, would have been the use? Women are not satisfied with your being a great man unless you look it." And Camille Langis, clenching his fist, continued: "Pray, madame, can you tell me where a Polish head, Polish moustache, and Polish smile are to be bought? Please tell me where such wares are on sale, and at what price? I am ready to pay whatever they ask——Oh, what a set women are! plague take them!"

"Aunts included?" asked Madame de Lorey, gravely.

He grew calmer, and replied: "No, madame, you are an extraordinary woman; there are no two like you, and I remember you every day in my prayers. You are my only refuge, my consoler and counsellor. Don't withhold your precious advice. What shall I do?"

Madame de Lorey looked up at the ceiling for a moment, and then said: "Transfer your affections, dear nephew; leave this mad girl to her fate and her Pole."

He sprang to his feet, exclaiming: "You ask me to do what is impossible. I am no longer my own master, she has gained possession of me and holds me fast. Transfer my affections? How can you imagine such a thing? I hate her, I curse her, but I adore her."

"You ought to be as much on your guard against hyperbole as metaphor," she replied, "they are hollow sounds. When people make up their mind to cease loving, they do it."

"That is when they have hearts to spare. I never had but one, and it is given away. Then you refuse to advise me?"

"What advice can I give you until I have seen M. Larinski and taken the hero's measure?"

"What! are you expecting to see him?"

"I look for a call from him, and am complaining of being kept in suspense."

"Will you really receive this man?"

"I have been asked to examine him."

"Then I am lost, since you think it necessary to hear him before condemning him. Our most sacred duty is to be resolutely unjust to our friends' enemies."

"Never fear, I shall have no pity for him."

"Do as you like, I have a plan of my own."

"What is that?"

"I will try to pick a quarrel about some trifle with this poacher, and I will blow his brains out."

"What a happy idea, my dear Camille! You will make a great deal of progress now, by killing him, won't you? Do you trust me? I have done very much for you already. The Abbé Miollens, as you are aware, knows a good deal about Polish exiles, I have asked him to make inquiries, and I have written also to Vienna for information. Antoinette is as mad as a March hare, I agree; but on points of honour she is as dainty as an ermine could be about the whiteness of its fur, and if there were the slightest stain on M. Larinski's past history, no bigger than a ten sous piece, she would soon forget him altogether. Leave it all to me, be prudent and don't blow out any one's brains. What would become of us if the only way of ridding ourselves of objectionable people were by killing them?"

As she was uttering these words, a servant entered, bringing a card on a silver waiter. She took it and cried: "Speak of the devil—here is the very man!"

She begged M. Langis to withdraw; he asked leave to stay, promising to behave in the most exemplary manner. She was trying to persuade him to go, when Count Abel Larinski entered.

Samuel Brohl had scarcely advanced three steps into Madame de Lorey's drawing-room, when he guessed why M. Moriaz had begged him to come, and what was the object of the commission with which he had been entrusted. Though the room fronted south, he felt it strike cold, even in the middle of August. He fancied he felt an icy wind, a chilling draught, go through him and make him shiver. He had no need to observe Madame de Lorey closely, to convince himself that he stood before his judge, and that the judge was not predisposed in his favour, and as soon as his eye met that of M. Camille Langis, something warned him that this young man was his enemy. Samuel Brohl had the gift of perception.

He delivered his message, gave Madame de Lorey the little parcel containing Mademoiselle Moriaz's sketch, and expressed his regret at having been too much engaged to come sooner. Madame de Lorey thanked him rather curtly for his courtesy, and asked for news of her god-daughter. He did not enlarge on this topic.

"The valley of St. Moritz is a dull place," said she.

"Say rather, madame, a dull place with many attractions for those who like it."

"It seems Mademoiselle Moriaz is wearied to death there."

"Do you think she ever suffers from ennui anywhere?"

"To be sure she does, but she relies on her imagination for amusement. She has a wonderful gift for entertaining herself, and varying her pleasures. Her imagination is fickle, it soon tires of its hobby, and finds some other to ride."

"An invaluable resource," he remarked, curtly. "But I assure you that you malign the Engadine. The trees there are not so well grown as those in your grounds; but the firs and cedars have a beauty of their own."

"I suppose you went to this hole for the sake of your health, count?"

"Yes, and no, madame. I am not ill; but my doctor maintained that I should be still better if I breathed the air of the Alps for three weeks. I have been laying in a stock of health for future needs."

"M. Larinski ascended the Morteratsch," put in Camille, who, seated on an ottoman, with his arms resting on his knees, kept a harsh hostile gaze fixed on Samuel Brohl. "That is an exploit only practicable to people in good health."

"It is no exploit," remarked Samuel, "only a work of patience, easy to any one not subject to dizziness."

"You are too modest," continued the young man. "Had I done as much, I should blow my trumpet."

"Have you tried the ascent?" asked Samuel.

"Never, I don't care about having exploits to narrate," replied Camille in an almost insulting tone.

Madame de Lorcy hastened to interpose, saying: "Is this the first time you have been in Paris, count?"

"Yes, madame," answered Samuel, retiring more and more into his shell.

"And do you like Paris as well as an Alpine cedar?"

"Much better, madame."

"Have you any friends there?"

"None, and to say the truth, I care little about making any."

"How is that?"

"Shall I tell you why? I don't like breaking through ice, and Poles complain of Parisian coldness being the most icy in the world."

"That is easily explained," exclaimed Camille. "Paris, the true Paris, is a little city with a population of a hundred thousand, and this little city is continually invaded by foreigners, who come in search of pleasure or fortune. Paris has naturally to act on the defensive."

"The Parisians pride themselves on their sententious," remarked Samuel. "It is easy enough to distinguish an honest man from an adventurer."

"I beg your pardon," rejoined M. Langis, "it requires a great deal of practice. The cleverest people are often deceived."

Samuel Brohl rose as if to take leave. Madame de Lorey prevailed on him to resume his seat. She felt that she was not taking the right course to fulfil her mission as cross-examining counsel, and to gain the defendant's confidence. Fearing lest Camille, notwithstanding his promise, might spoil all by some deliberate insult, she found a pretext for dismissing him, and begged him to go and examine a pair of horses which she had recently purchased.

As soon as he had left the room, she changed her tone, and became gracious; she set to work to remove the unpleasant impression made by his first reception, and Count Abel, feeling the atmosphere thaw, was set at ease. Without seeming to submit him to a cross-examination, she put a *great many* questions, to which he readily replied. Some visitors dropped in; it was an hour before he took his leave, after promising Madame de Lorey to dine with her the following day.

She did not wait till then before writing to M. Moriaz. Her letter ran thus:

"August 16th, 1875.

"My dear Friend,—You recommend me to be impartial. Why should I not be? I had indeed dreamed of a certain marriage; but one of the parties would not listen to my suggestions, and the other has cried off, so there is an end of my project, and Camille has enjoined me never to mention it again. You see that I have no longer any interest in the matter, or rather none but that which I feel in Antoinette, whose happiness is as dear to me as to you. By the way,

don't show her my letters; read to her such passages as I think desirable, I leave this to your discretion.

"Let me begin by giving you my ideas. People reproach me for being prejudiced; it is a dreadful calumny. I am going to tell you my creed, and you shall judge; I quarrel with our French customs in more than one point; I deplore the habit we have acquired of considering marriage as a contract, a kind of financial or commercial association, and of subordinating everything to the great principle of an equality of worldly possessions. This principle is revolting to me, dear friend. Foreigners accuse us of being an immoral nation. Heaven forbid! I am confident that we know and practise virtue as much as the English or Germans, and indeed, I should not shrink from maintaining that, of all countries in the world, ours is the most moral. That is not our failing. Our weakness is to be too sensible in our view of life, too circumspect, too prudent; we have no boldness in our enterprises, we like, as the saying runs, to have one foot on firm ground, and the other at no great distance. We require security and dislike risk, speculations are ungenial to us, we have too much foresight, and foresight means timidity. This is why we make no colonies and have such small families. Do I satisfy you?

"Napoleon I. used to say that in giving battle, he arranged to have seventy chances out of the hundred in his favour; the rest he left to fate. Well, good people, life is a battle; but the Frenchman of to-day will risk nothing. He is the most respectable but the least romantic of men, and I am dissatisfied with him. Read this passage in my letter to Antoinette.

"Our young people think they have a right to their parents' fortune; they are of opinion that their father would not be doing his duty if he did not leave them an assured position, a settled future. Their second care is to find a

wife who will bring them at least as much as they can offer. 'I have so much, you have so much, we were evidently made for one another, let us marry.' All this is deplorable.

"Tell me rather of the young American, accustomed to expect nothing from his parents but the education necessary to a man who has his way to make; he has his tools put into his hands and is taught how to use them, but has not a penny given him. 'You have learnt swimming, then swim, my friend.' Then he generally marries a woman without a farthing, who likes to spend. Let each man manage his own affairs! May the almighty dollar protect him, he will play his part in life gaily, and his wife will have no scruple in presenting him with ten children, who will work their way like himself. Let thirst marry hunger, it makes happy marriages and strong nations. Am I not romantic enough in all conscience?"

"Allow me to examine another case. Here is a man with some fortune; it enables him to consult nothing but his heart, and offer his name and income to a portionless woman whom he loves. I clap my hands, I approve of this proceeding and regret that we see so few instances of it among ourselves. Princes are rarely found to marry shepherdesses in France; on the other hand, we too often see handsome young fellows with little principle marrying heiresses, and these are cases open to the gravest objections.

"In a novel or on the stage, the poor young man who marries a millionaire's daughter is an excellent person; but in life it is otherwise. It may do if the poor young man has a trade or calling, and can make sufficient by his work to render him independent of his wife; but if he consents to depend on her, expects her to supply him with daily bread, submits to live in his wife's house, roll in his wife's carriage, asks her to supply him with clothes, pocket-money, and perhaps to keep his mistresses, I say frankly that the young man has no self-

respect, and what is a man without it? Besides, who can guarantee that when he marries, he has fallen in love with his wife and not with her fortune? Who can assure me that Count Abel Larinski—I will not mention names, personalities are odious, and I own there are exceptions. But how rare they are!

“Were I in Antoinette’s place, I should love the poor; but for their own sake, I would not marry them. The interests indeed of the whole human race are concerned: beggars have a talent for invention, leave them to themselves and they will invent a Jacquard loom or something of the sort; give them the key of a strong box, and they will seek nothing further, you will have scotched their genius.

“My dear professor, I have arranged a good many matches during the last fifteen years. I have married hunger and thirst three times, and by God’s help decided a millionaire to marry a penniless girl, but I never thought of helping a beggar to marry a rich one. Such are my ideas and my principles. Are you still listening? Sometimes you go to sleep during a sermon—there, your eyes are open now; I shall go on.

“I have seen your man. Well! To speak frankly, I only half like him. He has a very fine head, I must own, and would be a fortune to a sculptor. Then his eyes are very interesting, grave, sweet, gay or melancholy by turns. I have nothing to say against his manners or way of speaking; he can take his place in society, and is far from being a fool. With all this, there is something peculiar about him, a sort of mixture of two characters which I cannot understand. He seems like a lion or a fox according to circumstances; I think the fox predominates and the lion comes out accidentally. I am simply giving you my impressions such as they are, and am ready to retract them. I fancy that M. Larinski’s early days were passed among rather vulgar surroundings;

later on, he has been polished in good society, and, being intelligent, soon rubbed off all traces of vulgarity, though some of a man's early habits always cling to him. While he was in my drawing-room, he twice gave an appraiser's glance, you know what I mean, the glance that takes in a whole room in a minute, and can tell almost to a furthing what it contains is worth. It was at that moment above all that he looked like the fox.

"This is not all. I was reading the other day, in a tale translated from the Danish, of a princess who travelled all over the world and demanded hospitality one night at the gate of a palace. Was she a real princess or an impostor? The queen who took her in, thought it well to ascertain, and for this purpose, prepared for the stranger with her own hands, the softest of beds, consisting of five mattresses piled on two palliasses, while between the latter she took care to slip three grey peas. Next morning the stranger was asked how she had slept. 'Very ill indeed,' was her reply; 'I don't know what there was in my bed, but it bruised me dreadfully, I have the marks still, and I never closed my eyes till daybreak.' 'She is a real princess,' cried the queen.

"Is M. Larinski a real prince? I put him to the test of the three grey peas. I allowed myself to question him with an intrusive, pressing, indiscreet curiosity, and he did not appear to feel this. He replied with readiness or resignation, taking pains to satisfy me, and I was not satisfied. I shall see him again to-morrow, he is to come and dine here. I only wish to prove to myself that he is a real prince.

"My dear professor, you are the most imprudent of men, and whatever may happen, you have only yourself to blame. People ought not to be so ready in throwing their doors open to strangers. You will tell me that you owe it to M. Larinski that you did not break your leg in climbing down from your ~~chair~~ but, bless me, a father should break his leg in three

places rather than run the risk of giving his daughter to an adventurer; he can have his leg set. A more trifle!

"*P.S.*—I have opened my letter, wishing to prove to you how just I wish to be, and the extent of my impartiality. You know that the Abbé Miollens, my neighbour, has lived in Poland a long time, and that he is well received at the Hotel Lambert. I begged him to make inquiries, without giving him any explanation, of course. He brings me word that Count Abel Larinski is a real count. His father, the confiscated estates, the emigration to America, the isthmus of Panama—all this is quite true, it is a genuine story. The Countess Larinski was a saint. As to the son, nothing is known of him; he must have been only three or four years old when he landed on the quays of New York. No one has ever seen him, nor knew of his having taken part in the insurrection of 1863. As he has told the truth about his parents, we may suppose that he has told the truth about himself. So far, so good; but a man may have fought for his country and had a saint for his mother, without possessing any of those qualities which make a home happy. Well, I retract my epithet of adventurer; but I adhere to my opinion. Why did he give that appraiser's glance? Why does he sleep so soundly in a bed containing three grey peas?

"Kiss Antoinette for me. Give Mademoiselle Moiscney my respects, without telling her that she is a regular sycophant, a conviction with which I shall die. Was that dreadful rock so very hard to descend?"

Two days later Madame de Lorcy wrote a second letter:

August 18th.

"My dear Sir,—I have just received an answer I was expecting from Vienna, and hasten to make you acquainted with it. I had applied to our friend, Baron B——, chief secretary to the French Embassy at Vienna, to learn what reputa

tion Count Larinski had left behind him. He is looked upon there as a gentleman, an inventor of greater rashness than prudence, a thorough-going patriot, one of those Poles who can see nothing but Poland and their Utopia, and would set the world on fire without scruple in order to roast their own chestnuts in the embers. There seems to have been some good features about that explosive gun of his, and its inventor unites a kind of genius with an inexperience, ignorance and simplicity that might bring tears to your eyes. Of his private life there is nothing to be said. He had some debts, and his creditors felt uneasy when they saw him leave Vienna quietly one morning. He had scarcely arrived in Switzerland when he seems to have forwarded money and paid everything. This speaks well for him. As to the rest, his tastes were simple and his life regular; it was the gun that upset his budget. I may add that M. Larinski visited at several good houses in Vienna, and has left a very pleasing impression there. He was in especial request for his musical talents, about which there is much less doubt than the gun-making ones. He plays the piano splendidly, and has a very fine voice. By cultivating it, he might have made his way at the Opera; but his dignity keeps him back. This is Baron B——'s account. On my honour, I have neither added nor omitted anything.

"I am going to astonish you. Will you believe that I am about to reconcile myself to Count Larinski? What shocked me may be explained and excused by his long residence in America. He is a mixture of the Yankee and the Pole. Far from being prejudiced against him, I am now prepossessed in his favour. Do you know that I am not at all sure whether he entertains any serious feeling for your daughter! He admires her, and, being a man of taste, I can see how he can help it. I suspect Antoinette of having filled her head with some absurd notions. He speaks

of her on every occasion as calmly and deliberately as if he were speaking of a work of art ; I cannot believe that he is in love. I look in vain into his green eyes, I cannot discover any danger.

"He came to dinner yesterday, as I told you. I had invited the Abbé Miollens, and Camille had invited himself under a promise of acting like a sage ; the promise was but half kept, for I must let you know that for some unknown reason my nephew has conceived the greatest antipathy to M. Larinski ; he is apt to take dislikes. During dinner, the Abbé Miollens, a great linguist and traveller, who knows Poland and the Poles by heart, turned the conversation upon the insurrection of 1863. M. Larinski refused at first to enter on this sad subject, but by degrees the flood-gates opened. He told us the history of his prank or campaign without putting himself forward, but giving all the praise to others ; when suddenly something seemed to rise in his throat, his eyes filled, he broke off and begged us to talk of something else. Fortunately, he was not looking at that moment at Camille, whose lips were curved into a bitter smile. Young France has become so sceptical ! I frowned on the naughty boy, and, as I rose from table, sent him to smoke his cigar in the park.

"I must confess that M. Larinski has won over the Abbé Miollens, who is hard to please and disputes the privilege of fathoming hearts with the Almighty. You are aware that the abbé is a remarkable violinist ; he sent for his instrument, M. Larinski sat down to the piano, and the two gentlemen played a concerto of Mozart's, a divine performance by two first-rate musicians. The conversation which followed delighted me even more than the concerto.

"I forget what fatal concatenation brought us to discuss marriage. I did not miss this opportunity for airing, quite innocently, the little theories which you are aware of. Will

you believe that the count agrees with me, nay, goes still farther. He is more of a royalist than the king himself, and won't admit of any exceptions to the rule. According to him, the poor man who marries a rich wife forfeits his honour, degrades and sells himself; he is living on charity. On this theme he enlarged with gloomy eloquence. I assure you that the lion no longer resembles a fox.

"After this fine musician and great orator had left, the Abbé Miollens, who had remained, told me how charmed he had been with his conversation and manners; he seemed never tired of singing his praises, and went a little too far, I thought. But I joined him in regretting that a man of such merit should be reduced to expedients for a living. The abbé has a good deal of influence; he promised me to set to work at once to find some employment for M. Larinski. It has just occurred to him that there is some talk of forming an International College for living languages in London. One of the founders of this institution has applied to him to ask whether he can recommend any professor of the Slavonic tongues. This would suit us exactly, and I should be delighted to procure your protégé any occupation which might ensure him all the happiness to be found on the other side of the Channel. After this, can you still reproach me for being prejudiced against him?

"Good-bye, dear sir; my love to your sweet daughter. I trust you to be discreet and careful in reading my letters to her. Little girls can only be told half the truth."

A week later, Madame de Lorcy wrote a third letter to this effect:

August 25th.

"I am more and more pleased with M. Larinski, and vexed with myself for having ever mistrusted him. The Vicomtesse were quite right in thinking him a gentleman, and the Abbé Miollens did not overrate him. On your side,

dear friend, you write me word that you are not distressed about Antoinette, that she is cheerful and composed, that she walks, paints, and never mentions Count Abel Larinski, and that when you speak of him, she smiles and says nothing. You assert that she has reflected, and that time and distance have had their effect. 'Out of sight, out of mind!' you cry. Beware, I am less confiding; are you sure that Antoinette is no hypocrite?

"At any rate she has written me a charming letter, which makes no more mention of M. Larinski than if there were no Poland and no Poles in existence. She praises the Engadine, and declares that she wishes for nothing better than to end her days in a pine forest. I understand what she means, it would be a pine forest of her own choosing, where she would find parties, balls, select dinners, a salon, a Conservatoire of music, and M. Garnier's Opera. The last paragraph in her letter is devoted to the insurrection in Herzegovina, where her sympathies are of course completely on the side of the insurgents. 'If I were a man,' she writes, 'I should go and fight for them.' Just like her, she always took the part of the thieves in opposition to the police. I remember once, when she was only ten years old, telling her the adventure of an unfortunate traveller besieged in a forest by an army of wolves. He had barricaded himself in, and kindled large fires around his barricade. The wolves fell into the flames, and were roasted one after the other. Antoinette began to shed scalding tears, and I fancied she was pitying the unfortunate man's terror. Not in the least; she exclaimed, 'Poor, poor creatures!' It is her nature, and we cannot alter it. She will always take the wolves' part, especially if they are lean and find it difficult to make both ends meet.

"I told you that Count Larinski was a gentleman. He came to see me the day before yesterday. We have be-

come great friends. When I asked him if he still liked Paris, he replied with the most courteous smile, 'What I like best in Paris is Maisons-Laffitte.' Whereupon he added many pretty things which I shall not repeat. We walked all round the park together; thank heaven, I succeeded in withstanding his fascinations.

"We conversed politely; he is called an enthusiast, but he has some sound sense. I inquired whether he was a Turk or a Bosnian, and he replied: 'As a Christian and a Catholic, I am interested in the Oriental Christians, and take the part of the Cross against the Crescent.' He pronounced the words *Christian*, *Catholic* and *Cross*, with much emphasis; I suspect he is rather a bigot. He added, 'As a Pole, I am for the Turks.'

" 'I thought,' said I, 'that the Poles sympathised with all the oppressed.'

" 'The Poles,' he replied, 'cannot love whom their oppressors love, and can never forget that the Osmanlis are their natural allies and sometimes their refuge.'

"I gave him Antoinette's letter to read; I was glad of this opportunity of showing him that she can write a whole sheet without asking after him. He perused it with the greatest attention, but when he came to the remarkable passage: 'If I were a man, I would go and fight for them!' he smiled and handed it back to me, saying disdainfully and rather drily,

" 'Tell Mademoiselle Moriaz from me that I call myself a man, but that I shall not fight for the Bosnians, and that the Turks are my great friends.'

" 'She is crazy,' said I. 'Happily her craze changes with every moon.'

" 'What would you have?' he replied. 'It is better to be a little mad than commonplace. My poor mother often said, 'My son, we ought to lay in a stock of absurd en-

thusiasms in our youth, or else we shall reach the end of our journey with an empty heart, for we lose a great many on our way.'"

"Lay aside your violent alarms, my lord; no one has any designs on your daughter; we think her charming, but are not in love with her. Using many precautions and circumlocutions, I managed to question Count Larinski delicately about his affairs, a subject on which he never opens his lips. He frowned. I did not lose courage, but suggested this appointment as professor of the Slavonic languages, of which the Abbé had again spoken. I was expecting his suspicious pride to flare up any moment. But, upon reflection, he softened, thanked me, declined my kind offer and announced—guess what? What is my news worth? How much will you give me for it?—He announced, I say, that in a fortnight, mark me well, he was going back to Vienna, where he had a post promised him in the archive office under the Minister for War. I durst not ask him what it was worth; after all, if it satisfies him, it ought to satisfy us. I told you that Count Larinski was a gentleman!—In another fortnight!—You understand me.

"I am delighted to learn, my dear friend, how completely your health has been restored by the waters of St. Moritz and the air of the Engadine; but don't be imprudent. Partial cures are fatal. Beware of quitting Churwalden too soon for the soft, relaxing air of the plain. Your doctor, whom I have just seen, declares that if you hasten your return, he will not answer for the consequences. Antoinette, I am sure, will join her entreaties to ours. Don't let us see you for another three weeks!

"Follow my prescription, dear professor, and all will be well. Camille shall go away; he is becoming insufferable. He has had the presumption to maintain that I am a good, credulous sort of woman. That was his speech, and it was

not polite. There are no nephews left and respect is obsolete."

Ten days later, M. Moriaz received a fourth and last letter at Churwalden:

"September 3rd.

"My dear Friend,—Count Larinski is decidedly a delightful man, and I shall never forgive myself for having misjudged him. Until the day before yesterday, I had no idea of the extent of his merits and virtues. His mind is a country in which one makes discovery after discovery, and every step reveals a fresh prospect. Between ourselves, Antoinette is dreaming; what can have made her fancy this man in love with her? Such men as Count Larinski are enthusiastic artists, sensible and tender-hearted, with poetic imaginations; they like everything and love nothing, admiring a pretty woman as they admire a pretty flower, a humming-bird, or a picture by Titian. Did I tell you that the other day, in walking round the park with me, he was quite overcome by my purple beech, which is certainly a wonder! He was in an ecstasy, I really think the tears came into his eyes. I might have suspected him, of falling in love with my beech, yet he did not ask if he might marry it

"Moreover, if he *were* over head and ears in love with your daughter, never fear, he won't marry her, and for this reason—Have patience, I must go back a little.

"Abbé Miollens came to see me yesterday afternoon, quite distressed at M. Larinski's not having relished his proposition.

"‘There is no great harm,’ said I, ‘let him return to Vienna, where he has his friends, he will be happier there.’

"‘The harm in my eyes,’ replied he, ‘is, that he will be lost to us for ever. Vienna is such a long way off!’ If he had been a professor in London, only ten hours from Paris,

he might have crossed the Channel occasionally to come and play with me.'

"You will understand that I was but slightly affected by this reasoning; whatever it may cost me, I shall make the effort and resign myself to losing M. Larinski for ever; but the abbé is obstinate. 'I am afraid,' observed he, 'that the Austrians pay their archive keepers but poorly; the English are more liberal in their ideas, and Lord C—— had given me *carte blanche*.'

"'Oh,' said I, 'that is a difficult point to touch upon. As soon as the question of bread and cheese is approached, the gentleman draws in his horns as if his dignity were at stake.'

"'I can credit that,' he replied, 'there is a marvellous nobility of feeling at the base of his character; he is not proud, but the embodiment of pride.'

"The abbé is passionately fond of Horace, he declares that to this great poet he owes the profound knowledge of men which distinguishes him. He quoted to me a Latin verse which he was kind enough to translate, meaning that there are some horses which wince and prance when they are touched in a delicate part. 'Polcs are like them,' said he.

"As we were talking, in walked M. Larinski, and I kept both gentlemen to dinner. In the evening they gave me another concert. Why was not Antoinette there? I could have fancied myself at the Conservatoire; then we chatted, and the abbé, who never relinquishes an idea, said bluntly to the count:—

"'My dear count, have you thought it over? If you were to go to London, we might hope to see you frequently, and then the salary—Since the terrible word has escaped me, let me say that I would do my best to obtain for you an emolument worthy of your merits, your scientific attainments, your character and position—

"He was unable to finish his speech ; the count winced like Horace's horse, and cried : ' Oh, Mozart, what a disagreeable topic ! '

"Then he added gravely ; ' Monsieur l' abbé, you are goodness itself ; but the situation I have had offered me at Vienna seems more suited to my capacities ; I am afraid I should make an abominable professor, and even if the salary were twice as much, it would be hardly a reason to make me decide. '

"The abbé insisted, he always does insist : ' In the present age, ' said he, ' more than any other, it is impossible to live on air. '

" ' I have lived on it sometimes, ' replied the count gaily, ' and it did me no harm. My health is proof against hardships. You would hardly believe the extent to which I carry my indifference in everything relating to money matters. In me it is not a virtue, but an infirmity ; I am the true child of my country and my father. I feel incapable of thinking of the future and practising the French virtue of economy. When my purse is full, I empty it, and then doom myself to privations, or, rather, enjoy them. There seems to me to be no real pleasure without a slight touch of pain. Besides, I am fond of contrasts. Now and then I fancy myself a millionaire, I act the nabob and give the rein to my fancies ; next day I lie on the bare floor, live on toast and water, and feel perfectly happy. In short, I am a madman once a year and a philosopher all the rest of it. '

" ' The worst of it is, ' rejoined the abbé, ' that sometimes one day's madness is enough to compromise a philosopher's future for ever. '

" ' Oh, don't be uneasy, ' he replied, ' my extravagances are never very fatal. There was method in Hamlet's madness, and there is always a gleam of reason in mine. '

"While making this declaration of his principles, he had sat down again to the piano and was running his fingers over the keys. Suddenly he struck up a German song which I got the Abbé Miollens to translate to me. It is of no great length; the hero of this song is an amorous pine-tree, planted on the summit of a barren mountain in the north; it is solitary and sad, the snow and ice have wrapped it in a white mantle, and it spends its weary hours in dreaming of a palm-tree which it appears it once met during its travels.

"M. Larinski sang his little melody with such pathetic emphasis that the good abbé was moved, and I grew anxious. If you once feel an anxiety, it keeps recurring. I asked myself whether he might not have met his palm-tree in the Engadine, and said to him rather coldly: 'Is the day of your departure definitely fixed? Will not you favour us with a reprieve?'

"He ran over a pearly chromatic scale and replied: 'Alas, madame, I am only awaiting a letter which must arrive soon: I shall be obliged, though reluctantly, to take my leave before the end of another week.'

"'You shall not leave,' said the Abbé Miollens, 'without letting us hear the poem of the pine-tree again. You repeated it with so much feeling that I felt as if you were relating an episode in your own history. Do you ever dream of a palm-tree, my dear count?'

"His reply was. 'I have no longer the right to dream, I am no longer free.'

"The abbé started and exclaimed, naively; 'What, are you wedded?'

"'I thought I had told you,' he replied with a melancholy smile, and began at once to talk about a ballet which he had seen the night before at the opera, and with which he was but half satisfied.

"You will easily believe that when he uttered these words, 'I thought I had told you,' I was ready to throw myself on his neck. I was so happy that I felt afraid lest he should read in my eyes my joy, my surprise, and my intense gratitude. I think him very keen, and fancy that he has long since guessed the secret thoughts and suspicions with which he inspired me. If he has been making a little fun of me, I forgive him; a well-bred man, when unjustly suspected, has a right to revenge himself by a touch of irony. I had the horses put to my carriage to take him back to the railway, and the abbé and I went with him to the station. We cannot show too much attention to deserving people whom fortune has illtreated.

"Well, what do you say now, my dear friend? Was I wrong in declaring M. Larinski to be a delightful man? He is going away in a week, and is married; unhappily married, I fear, for his smile was a sad one. You will find that he has married out of gratitude some one beneath him, who has nursed him through an illness, one of those women whom it is impossible to introduce into society; it would be just like him. Fortunately, the law makes no distinction between equal and unequal matches, and I have no doubt that his is legal.

"The alarm was a sharp one. Shall I light up my lamps? I am tempted to illuminate Cormeilles and Maisons-Laffitte. How shall you set to work to disabuse our dreamer? Were I you, I should take certain precautions. Be prudent, go to work gently, and for the future take my advice and climb no more rocks; you see what might be the end of it.

"Once more, don't be in a hurry to return. The heat here has been oppressive for the last few days, we are literally stifling. You ought to spend another fortnight in the pine-tree shades and four thousand feet above the level of the sea.

"Farewell, my dear professor; I am interrupted while writing by the incredulous, sceptical, suspicious, absurd, ridiculous Camille, who commends himself respectfully to your indulgent kindness."

CHAPTER VI.

ON reading Madame de Lorcy's fourth letter, M. Moriaz felt a sense of satisfaction and deliverance which he could not disguise. His daughter had gone out to make a call in the neighbourhood, and he was alone with Mademoiselle Moiseney, who said: "Have you had good news, sir?"

"Excellent," he replied, and then recovering himself, added: "Excellent or deplorable or vexatious, according as you may think."

After finishing his letter and putting it back into the envelope, he brooded for some minutes, asking himself how he should break this excellent news. His daughter had been an enigma to him for the last three weeks. She had not once mentioned Count Larinski's name. She liked Churwalden as well as St. Moritz, and seemed cheerful, calm, and perfectly happy. Had she quieted down? Had she changed her mind? M. Moriaz could not tell, but he knew that still waters run deep, and that a young girl's mind is unfathomable. Forewarned is forearmed, and he was now on his guard against everything. "If I speak to her," thought he, "I shall not be able to hide my joy, and perhaps she may go into hysterics." He had a horror of hysterics; so he resolved to have recourse to Mademoiselle Moiseney, and said abruptly:

"I suppose, mademoiselle, you know what is going on, Antoinette takes you into her confidence."

She opened her eyes, and was about to reply that she knew nothing; but she recovered herself, and drawing up her little sharp head above her thin shoulders, said proudly: "Do you imagine, sir, that Antoinette can have any secrets from me?"

"Certainly not!" was his rejoinder. "And do you approve and encourage her feelings towards M. Larinski."

Mademoiselle Moiseney gave a great start; she had not the slightest idea that Count Larinski's presence had had the least effect on Mademoiselle Moriaz, but as her mind could travel quickly on occasion, she grasped in one moment all the consequences of this prodigious event. A cloud swam before her eyes; in this cloud she saw all kinds of things both to please and displease her; she sat with her mouth open, endeavouring to unravel the skein. She said to herself: "It is a delusion, it is ~~not~~ so, it can't be." But then she said: "Mademoiselle Moriaz can no more err than the queen of England; since she wishes it, she must be justified in wishing it."

Mademoiselle Moiseney finally regained her self-possession, and a gracious smile played on her lips as she exclaimed: "He has no fortune, but he has a grand name. The Countess Larinski! How well it sounds!"

"Perfect from a musical point of view, I allow," replied M. Moriaz. "Unfortunately there are other things beside music in the world."

She did not hear him, but absorbed in her own ideas, without taking time to draw breath, continued with extraordinary volubility: "You will laugh at me, but whether you believe me or not, I have long foreseen this marriage. I have presentiments which never mislead me, and I felt sure it would end in this. What a handsome couple! Cannot you fancy them driving in an open carriage in the Bois or entering a box at the Opera? They will create a sensation.

And pray take notice, that, boasting apart, I have had a hand in it. The very first time I saw Count Larinski, at the table d'hôte at Bergün, you know, I recognised at once that he was a remarkable man——"

"By the way in which he ate his trout," put in M. Moriaz ; "it does great credit to your insight."

"Only ask Antoinette," she rejoined, "whether I did not praise the handsome stranger that very night. She would insist that his head was buried between his shoulders ; can you believe it, that man's head buried between his shoulders ? Ah, I felt sure how it would end ! Do you wish to test my insight ? Shall I tell you who the letter you have just received, which contains such excellent news, comes from ? It is from the count, he has made his declaration at last. I guessed it at once. Ah, sir, I sympathise with your joy. This is just the son-in-law I dreamed of for you. A superior man, but one with his heart on his sleeve, and so good-natured and open."

"Do you really think him as open as the daylight ?" asked M. Moriaz, fanning himself with his letter.

"He told us the story of his life," answered she, in a dogmatic tone.

"A beautiful story. I only regret that he omitted one detail likely to have interested us."

"A sad detail ?" asked she, fixing on him her gooseberry-coloured eyes.

"On the contrary, a circumstance which does him great honour, and disposes me in his favour. You may be sure, my dear lady, that I should be charmed to receive a son-in-law at your hands, and to give my daughter to a man whose genius and noble sentiments you divined merely from seeing him eat. Unfortunately, I am afraid this marriage will not take place, there is one trifling obstacle in the way."

"What is that?"

"Count Larinski forgot to tell us that he was already married."

Mademoiselle Moiseney gave a cry of distress. M. Moriaz handed her Madame de Lorcy's letter; she read it and felt overwhelmed: a pitiless finger had burst the iridescent bubble which she had just blown, and saw glistening at the end of her pipe.

"Don't give way to despair," said M. Moriaz, "be brave, follow my example and imitate my resignation; but pray how do you think Antoinette will take it?"

"It will be a terrible blow to her," replied Mademoiselle Moiseney; "she was so fond of him!"

"How do you know, since she did not think it expedient to tell you so?"

"I am sure of it. Poor dear Antoinette! We must break it to her as gently as possible, and I feel that only myself——"

"I feel so too," put in M. Moriaz hastily, "you only can operate on our patient without making her suffer. You are so skilful, your hand is so light! Manage it discreetly, mademoiselle, I entrust it to you."

So saying, he seized his hat and stick and hurried out, rather anxious as to the result, but feeling too happy and thankful to be a good consoler himself.

Mademoiselle Moriaz soon came in from her walk, humming an air, with a bright complexion, happy face, and beaming eyes, and holding a bunch of heather in her hand. Mademoiselle Moiseney went to meet her with a lugubrious face, her head bent down, and her eyes swimming with tears. Antoinette was struck by the consternation depicted on her countenance.

"Why, whatever is the matter, my dear Jeanne?" she said. "you look as if you had been at a funeral."

"Alas!" sighed Mademoiselle Moiseney, "I have some sad news for you."

"What! Can they have written word from Cormeilles that your parrot is dead?"

"Be sensible, my dear child, and be strong, summon up all your courage."

"For heaven's sake, what is it?"

"Why cannot I spare you this grief!—Your father has just had a letter from Madame de Leroy."

Antoinette paid more attention and breathed more quickly.

"And what was so terrible and heartrending in the letter?" she asked with a forced smile.

"It is well that I am here," continued Mademoiselle Moiseney. "You know that your joys and sorrows are mine. Every consolation that can be offered by the most tender sympathy—"

"My dear Jeanne, for heaven's sake, explain yourself first and console me afterwards."

"You never told me, my child, I have a right to complain; but I had guessed all. I can read your heart. I was sure that you loved him."

"Of whom are you speaking?" replied Antoinette, as the colour mounted to her face.

"Of a most bewitching man, who, through inconceivable heedlessness or guilty design, neglected to inform us that he was married." And with these words, Mademoiselle Moiseney stretched out both arms to receive Mademoiselle Moriaz, expecting to see her faint.

But Mademoiselle Moriaz did not faint. The sudden flush had vanished and left her pale; but she remained standing, with her head proudly erect, and murmured: "What, is M. Larinski married?—I sincerely congratulate the Countess Larinski."

Then she began to arrange the flowers she had just

brought in in a vase. Mademoiselle Moiseney was quite taken aback by her calmness, she gazed at her in stupefaction and suddenly cried, "Thank Heaven, you did not care for him! Your father was mistaken, he often is mistaken; he gets strange ideas into his head sometimes, and had persuaded himself that it would be a terrible blow to you, but he little knows you. Well! M. Larinski was certainly not amiss, and I don't deny his merits; but I always felt rather mistrustful of him, his manner was not quite straightforward, I suspected him of concealing something. It seems that he has made a *mésalliance* which he does not care to speak of. It is sad that a man with such good manners should have low tastes and loose morals. He ought to have told us all; it was neither honest nor delicate."

"You are dreaming, dear," replied Antoinette. "By what law of God or man was M. Larinski bound to tell us everything? Do you look upon yourself as his confessor, and expect him to own his errors to us as if before the judgment-seat?" So saying, she took off her hat and mantle, and seated herself near the window, opening a book and proceeding to read most diligently.

"Thank Heaven, she did not care for him," thought Mademoiselle Moiseney, not perceiving that Mademoiselle Moriaz was unconsciously turning over two or three leaves at a time.

Absorbed as she was in her book, Antoinette recognised her father's step, as he came up the stairs on his way to his room. She hastened towards him. He was glad to notice that her colour had not flown and her eyes were not red, but he felt less satisfied when she said in a clear, calm voice: "Will you be so good as to show me the letter you have had from Madame de Lorcy?"

"For what purpose?" was his reply. "I know it by heart and will repeat it to you."

"Then it is a letter not fit to be shown?"

"By no means; but when I say that I am ready to tell you its contents—"

"I would rather read it myself."

"After all, you have a right to see it; here it is, but pray do not brood over any unlucky expression—"

"Madame de Lorey always manages to hit on the right word to express her meaning," she replied.

As soon as Antoinette had glanced rapidly over Madame de Lorey's two small closely written sheets, she looked up with a smile. "Confess," she resumed, "that you have found Madame de Lorey a very useful and zealous ally; acknowledge that she has worked hard and that you are greatly indebted to her for taking such pains to rid you of this well-bred, this delightful man, her very words, you remember."

M. Moriaz remonstrated: "What," said he, "do you imagine there has been any trick? Can you possibly suspect me of hatching some dark plot with Madame de Lorey? Do you think me capable of treachery?"

"Heaven forbid! I only accuse you of being too triumphant and unable to conceal it."

"Is that a crime?"

"Perhaps rather an indiscretion."

"I swear, my dear child, that your happiness is my only consideration, and as to Madame de Lorey, since M. Langis has given up all thoughts of you, what interest, what reason could she have—?"

"I don't know," broke in Antoinette; "but her prejudices stand for reasons."

"Then you refuse to believe that Count Larinski is married?"

"I believe it, but don't feel sure of it, and I should like to make certain. Have I not been open throughout? have I

not yielded readily to your wishes? I consented to abide by Madame de Lorey's sentence. She has deigned to be merciful to the defendant, she has owned M. Larinski to be a perfectly honourable, and even a delightful man; but she has made out, with only a few days' interval, first that he is not in love with me, and then that he has deceived me by allowing me to believe him still free. I wish to satisfy myself and to feel convinced that I am not being trifled with."

"And you decide—"

"I decide that with your leave we will start for Corneilles to-morrow morning."

This decision was not at all acceptable to M. Moriaz, and his face lengthened perceptibly.

"What are you afraid of?" she said. "You know that I have some strength of character, and, whatever Madame de Lorey may say, you know that I am not without sense. When my mistake is proved, I will buy my romance for ever, and promise you never to wear mourning for it."

"Well then," said he, "I believe in your good sense and will trust your discretion, we will start for Corneilles to-morrow."

Four days later, Madame de Lorey was walking in one of the avenues of her park. There she was joined by M. Langis, to whom she said gaily:

"Still grave and melancholy, my dear Camille! When will you doff those pensive looks? I can't understand you. I do all I can to please you, and arrange matters to your liking, but nothing makes you smile. You remind me of La Fontaine's hare:—*'The animal is sad, consumed with fear.'*"

"Fear and hatred, madame," he replied. "I hate this man, he is unbearable, and I shall never come to Maisons again, there is any danger of meeting him. Has he taken his final leave?"

"Not yet, have a little patience, we have only a few minutes to wait. What harm can this man do you now? The lion's claws are clipped, nay, he has actually been so obliging as to muzzle himself. Is a disarmed enemy who yields at discretion to be pursued by hatred?"

"Very well, madame; if he is not gone in three days I shall return to my first idea, it was a good one."

"Will you run him through?"

"With the utmost pleasure."

"For the love of the thing?"

"I am not bloodthirsty, but I should feel a singular pleasure in ripping up the skin of this mysterious personage."

Madame de Lorey shrugged her shoulders. "What makes you call him mysterious? Once more, my dear boy, you are perfectly unreasonable. You ought to adore M. Larinski, you are under the greatest obligations to him. He was the first to succeed in touching the heart of our indifferent darling, he has broken the charm; she was the Sleeping Beauty, he has awakened her, and, thank Heaven, cannot marry her. I can see her now at Churwalden, a prey to intense ennui, weeping over her illusions, and furious at having been deceived. Cannot you guess what advantage may be taken of a woman's anger?"

"You know whether I love her," returned M. Langis, "yet I have no wish to owe anything to her sorrows."

"You are a perfect child, put yourself under guidance. Now is the time to make your declaration. In a few days, start for Churwalden, and say to this indignant woman, I dissembled, I love you. In short, tell her all the story of your love, and exhaust your store of hyperbole on the occasion, if you like. I will guarantee you a hearing, she will say to herself, I wanted an opportunity of avenging myself, and here it is."

"I would gladly believe you, madame," he rejoined, "but are you sure that Mademoiselle Moriaz is still at Churwalden?" And pointing to the end of the avenue, he directed her attention to a pretty nut-brown dress sweeping along the gravel towards them.

"Why, really, I believe it is she," cried Madame de Lorey. "M. Moriaz is the clumsiest man; but there is no great harm done after all."

Mademoiselle Moriaz had reached Cormeilles the evening before. After resting indifferently at the end of her fatiguing journey, she had ordered the horses to be put to in order that she might pay her respects at once to her god-mother, who could not but be touched by this attention on her part.

Madame de Lorey ran to meet Antoinette and kissed her again and again, saying: "So here you are back again at last, my darling! How delighted I am to see you. What a time you have been away, I began to fear you would take root in the Grisons. Is it such a fascinating country? I believe that it was all your father's selfishness, and that he sacrificed you to his own convenience by prolonging his course of baths, but since you are here, I will forgive him. Your poor protégés are raising a hue and cry after you. Who was it that asked after you the other day? Oh, Mademoiselle Galet, whose quarterly allowance I paid, according to your directions. How you spoil her! I found a bouquet fit for a duchess on her table, she maintained that you had sent it all that way, and I had the greatest difficulty to make her understand that double camellias are not to be gathered on the Roseg glacier. Strew Mademoiselle Galet's path and parterre with flowers if you will, but it is madness to throw a bushel of double camellias at her head, and I have serious thoughts of putting you into an asylum. Never mind, however, I am glad to see you back. Your com-

plexion is certainly splendid ; don't you think she looks well, Camille ? ”

Mademoiselle Moriaz received Madame de Lorey's embraces coldly, but favoured M. Langis with a gracious smile, and pressed his hand affectionately. Madame de Lorey brought them into the drawing-room, where they talked on indifferent subjects. Antoinette waited for M. Langis to depart before introducing the subject she was anxious to investigate. At the end of twenty minutes, he rose, but sat down again immediately. A door had just opened, and Count Abel Larinski had entered.

At the sight of Samuel Brohl, both women changed colour ; the one turned red with the effort she had to make to disguise her vexation, the other grew pale with emotion. Samuel Brohl crossed the room deliberately, without appearing to notice who was with Madame de Lorey, then suddenly started as if he had received an electric shock, and looked disturbed and out of countenance. Was he as much astonished as he seemed ? The hill of Sannois had long been his favourite walk, and he never climbed it without going as far as a spot from which he could see the front of a house whose shutters had been completely closed for the last two months. He might chance to have seen them open the evening before. Induction is a scientific process familiar to such men as Samuel Brohl.

He had a strong will and great self-control. He soon recovered himself and raised his head with the air of a man ready to face any danger. After paying his respects to Madame de Lorey, he went up to Antoinette and inquired after her health in a grave, and almost ceremonious voice.

“ Your visit distresses me, my dear count,” said Madame de Lorey ; “ I fear it is your last. Are you come to bid me goodbye ? ”

“ Alas, madame, yes,” he replied. “ The letter I was ex-

pocting has not yet arrived; but this delay will not alter my plans, and in three days I shall have quitted Paris."

"Without regret, with no desire to return!" asked Madame de Lorey.

"I shall regret nothing but Maisons and my kind reception there. Paris is too large, it makes little folk like myself feel their insignificance too much; without being over proud, no one likes to become a mere atom. Vienna suits me better, I feel more at my ease there, it is a city after my own heart. Birds should not change their nests."

With this the Count began to describe and praise the Prater with its five avenues, Schönbrunn, with its botanic garden and Gloriette, St. Stephen's, and the limpid waters of the Danube, sometimes addressing Antoinette, who listened in silence, and sometimes Madame de Lorey, whose eyes, directed occasionally towards M. Langis, seemed to be saying: "Was I not right? Confess that there was no reason for your apprehensions? You hear him, he has but half an hour to spend with her, and is describing the Prater. Do you still think of running him through? Pray say one word of courtesy to him. It is not he, but you, who are mysterious; lay aside your sinister air. How long is this taciturn reverie of yours to last? You make one laugh, you are playing the fool. You look like a sphinx in the desert contemplating a serpent, and taking a harmless snake for a viper." M. Langis understood what she meant, but maintained his sinister air.

After upholding Vienna and its environs, Samuel Brohl praised the Viennese and their easy light-hearted disposition. He told some humorous anecdotes. True, there was something rather forced and feverish about his gaiety, still he was gay. Madame de Lorey responded, Mademoiselle Moriaz continued silent; she played with the guipure on her Marie-

Antoinette fichtu, and keeping her eyes fixed on it, seemed to be counting the meshes.

Samuel Brohl stopped short in the middle of a sentence and rose abruptly. He turned to Antoinette, begging her, in a low voice, to tell M. Moriaz how much he regretted that his approaching departure would deprive him of the honour and pleasure of calling on him at Cormeilles, then shaking hands with Madame de Lorey, he thanked her for the happy moments he had spent in her society and asked her to give his kind remembrances to the Abbé Mollens.

"We shall see you again, my dear count," said she in a clear voice, dwelling on her words, "and I hope that before long we shall make the Countess Larinski's acquaintance."

He looked at her in amazement and murmured: "I lost my mother ten years ago."

Then, without giving Madame de Lorey time to explain herself further, he moved quickly towards the door, followed by three pairs of speaking eyes, each bearing a different message. The room was large, and the angel of silence hovered over it during the thirty seconds it took him to cross it.

He was going out, when fate inspired him with an unlucky thought. He could not resist the longing to take one last look at Mademoiselle Moriaz, and engrave her adored image on his memory for ever. He turned, and their eyes met. He paid dearly for this weakness. The constraint he had put himself under for the last hour appeared to have exhausted his strength. His heart seemed to refuse to beat, his limbs grew rigid and refused to obey him, his teeth set, his pupils dilated, and his head swam. He sank backwards on the inlaid floor, falling as heavily as a lump of lead, and lay there unconscious.

Mademoiselle Moriaz could not suppress a scream, and was ready to faint. Madame de Lorey grasped her round

the waist and dragged her into the adjoining room, after throwing M. Lang's a bottle of salts, with the words: "Look after Count Larinski."

The first thing that M. Langis did was to put the bottle on a table; then he went up to Samuel Brohl, who still in his swoon and unconscious, looked dead or nearly so. He gazed at him for a moment and bent over him; then folding his arms and shrugging his shoulders, said: "Come, get up, sir, Mademoiselle Moriaz is not in the room."

Samuel Brohl did not stir. "You did not hear me," continued Camille. "You are a splendid fellow, count, really handsome, your attitude is irreproachable, and any one might take you for a corpse. Your fall was admirable, I vow that I never saw any one faint more naturally at the theatre, but don't trouble yourself to prolong the effort, Mademoiselle Moriaz is not here, I repeat."

Samuel Brohl remained rigid and motionless.

"Perhaps you wish to test the strength of my muscles," continued Camille, "you shall have that satisfaction." So saying, he laid hold of the prostrate man and exerted all his strength to raise him and place him on a couch, where he lay at full length.

Camille examined him again and resumed: "How long is this tragi-comedy to last? Cannot I find some means of awaking you? Let me see, what shall I say? Listen, sir. I love the woman you pretend to love with my whole heart. Won't that do? Sir, you are a Polish adventurer, and I bestow on your social talents all the admiration which I lack for your character. Won't even that do? Well, in your present state, I cannot lift a finger against you, but pray consider the blow as received."

He fancied that the body moved slightly, and exclaimed: "Thank heaven, you have given signs of life, my insult has found its way to your heart. I shall be delighted to

give you satisfaction, you may command me. The day, place, and weapon I leave entirely to your choice. And stay, you may rely absolutely on my discretion; I swear that no one shall learn from me that your swoons have ears and resent insults. This is my address, sir."

And drawing a card from his pocket, Camille attempted to slip it into the cold, drooping hand, from which it slipped. "What obstinacy!" said he. "As you choose, sir, I have exhausted my eloquence."

He turned his back on Samuel Brohl, sat down in an easy-chair, took up a newspaper and opened it. At this moment the door again opened, and Madame de Lorcy re-appeared.

"What in the world are you doing there, Camille?" cried she.

"You see, madame," replied he, "I am waiting till this grand actor has finished his part."

He had not observed that Mademoiselle Moriaz had also re-entered the room. She gave him an angry, indignant, threatening glance, in which he read his condemnation. He endeavoured to find some words of explanation or excuse to disarm her wrath, but his voice failed him, he bowed humbly, took up his hat and left the room.

Madame de Lorcy, in great agitation, opened a window, and threw some water on Samuel Brohl's face, rubbing his temples with an energy amounting to roughness, and making him inhale some strong salts.

"Go, my dear, do," said she to Antoinette; this is not the place for you."

Antoinette did not go; with a pained face and quivering lips, she took a seat at some distance from the sofa.

At length Madame de Lorcy's energetic measures produced their effect. Samuel Brohl was not dead; his arms stirred, his legs relaxed, and in a few moments he opened his eyes and then his mouth; he sat up and stammered out:

"Where am I—what has happened?—Ah, she was here just now!"

Madame de Lorey laid her hand on his lips and bending down to his ear, said in a severe, imperious voice: "She is here still."

She could not manage to make him understand. People recover but gradually from such a swoon as his. Samuel Brohl felt faint again, his eyes re-closed, and he buried his face in his hands. After keeping silence for some minutes, he said in a stifled voice: "Pray forgive me, madame, I am ashamed of myself; my courage failed, my strength betrayed me. I love her madly, and had vowed never to see her again. I am going away on purpose to avoid her."

He had raised his head and saw Antoinette, but stared at her blankly as if he did not know her. At length he recognised her, made a gesture of alarm, rose hastily, and fled from the room.

Mademoiselle Moriaz went up to Madame de Lorey and said: "Well! what do you think?"

"I think, my dear," replied she, "that Madame de Lorey is a fool, and Count Larinski a very clever man."

Antoinette regarded her with a bitter smile, and said, with a light touch on her arm:

"Allow, madame, that if he had a hundred thousand francs a year, you would not think of doubting his sincerity."

Madame de Lorey made no reply; she could not contradict her, and was vexed at being both right and wrong. Such mischances occasionally befall women of the world.

CHAPTER VII.

ON entering her carriage to return to Corneilles, Mademoiselle Moriaz was troubled by an agitation which did not subside throughout the drive. She felt a tender passionate sentiment for the man who had fainted on taking leave of her, anger against the foolish prejudices and paltry stratagems of people of the world, joy at having defeated a plot against her happiness, and pride in her own clear perceptions, because she had not been deceived in her choice, because the man she loved was worthy of her affection. For several days she had been suffering cruelly from mental anxiety and anguish ; again and again she had said to herself : " Perhaps they are right."

A woman's heart believes itself at the mercy of an error, and is tortured by any doubts of itself and its clearness of perception. If its divinity be proved an idol and what it adored worthy of contempt, it feels ready to die, and imagines that a spring in the vast machinery of the universe is broken, that heaven and earth are about to melt away, and yet a feminine error is attended by no such serious consequences. The sun goes on shining, and the earth continues to revolve. The machinery of the universe would be liable to many an accident, were it thrown out of gear whenever a woman makes a mistake.

"I was right, they could not understand him," thought Mademoiselle Moriaz as she crossed the Seine, and contemplated joyfully the soft blue sky, the quiet waters, the green

banks of the stream, and a long row of poplars which seemed to enjoy seeing it flow. She felt as if everything were going on right, as if order reigned everywhere, the great Engineer was at his post, the world was in good hands, and its travellers need fear no accident.

When she reached Cormeilles, M. Moriaz was shut up in his laboratory, which he had been charmed to find *in statu quo* and good condition. A velvet cap on his head or over his ear, his sleeves rolled back, an unbleached calico apron round his neck and waist, and a featherbrush in his hand, he was carefully examining all his dear little apparatus, his furnaces, his long-necked and full-bellied matrasses, the body and neck of his retorts, his cucurbite, the head and worm of his stills. Receivers, tubes, pneumatic troughs, crucibles, mortars, blowpipes, capsules, lamps, he reviewed them all, to make sure that they had sustained no damage during his absence. He dusted his glass jars carefully, examined their labels, ascertained that his tubed receivers were not cracked, and the orifice of his gauges open. He was as happy as a king reviewing his troops and convincing himself that they looked well and would do honour to their master when they come under fire.

Agreeably employed as he had been for two hours, M. Moriaz had not forgotten his daughter's and M. Larinski's existence. He knew that Antoinette had gone to Maisons-Laffitte to have an explanation with Madame de Lorcy, and this thought cast a shade over his happiness. Yet he hoped that this interview might further his wishes, and that the Polish star which gave him so much uneasiness was about to vanish for ever from his horizon.

There was a knock at the door of his laboratory, he cried "Come in!" and turning round, saw Antoinette standing on the threshold. He looked at her closely. Her eyes beamed and her whole face looked so bright and happy that

his arms fell by his side, and a phial that he was holding slipped from his hand.

"What a naughty girl this is to come breaking her father's things!" she cried gaily.

"There is no great harm done," he replied, turning to sweep up the broken fragments of glass. It was one means of gaining time. He set about it so awkwardly that she took the brush from his hands: "This is the way to sweep," said she.

He gazed at her as she did it, saying to himself: "This is just the reverse of the scene at Churwalden. I have the long face, and *she* cannot manage to conceal her joy. Such is the turn things take in this world!"

As soon as she had finished sweeping, she looked all round and exclaimed: "Here you are back in your paradise again, in the enchanted region where you taste such ineffable delights."

"Yes, I am happy here, tolerably happy," he replied modestly.

"You *are* fastidious! why, your laboratory is simply charming."

"Yes, it is convenient, but I was just thinking that there is one thing wanting in it. Do you know what my dream is? To have a transparent still in this corner. Perhaps you may not know what this still is. It is a kind of alembic placed upon a retort and surmounted by a capital. You are about to ask what is a capital; I shall answer, the wide part of a chimney which facilitates the escape of volatile principles and noxious vapours. See, here is a glass still. Although it has been fixed against a pier between two windows, it is rather dark. Well almost every German chemist has in his laboratory a still for which the wall has been broken through and replaced by glass. That is the way to get light."

"Who will reproach you with a want of imagination? You are a most romantic man and your romance is a transparent still. That is why you are so indulgent to the romances of others."

Antoinette dusted a chair with the feather brush, encoiled herself in it, and placing another seat opposite, said

"Come and sit here, close to me, on this stool, I will lay a cushion on it to make it softer. Come, I have something to say to you."

M. Moriaz approached submissively. "Must I take off my apron?" he asked.

"Why?"

"I foresee that our conversation will turn upon highly romantic matters. I wish to be in keeping."

"Never mind, your apron is very becoming. All that I want and demand is your close attention."

She gave him a minute account of what had taken place at Madame de Lorey's. She began her story quietly, then grew animated and warmer by degrees, her eyes kindling. He listened with vexation, gazing at her with pleasurable pride and saying to himself: "Bless me, how pretty she is, and what a lucky rascal that Pole must be!"

When she had finished, she paused a few moments to hear his comments. But as he maintained a gloomy silence, she grew impatient: "Speak, I want to hear all you think," said she.

"I think you are adorable."

"Please do be serious."

"Seriously," he resumed, "I am not sure that you are mistaken, nor can I prove you to be right; I have my doubts still."

"According to your views," she exclaimed indignantly: "the only realities in the world are things that can be seen, touched, and handled, a retort and its contents! Every-

thing beyond that is nothing or false. Your wretched retorts! If I had my way, I would break every one of them."

The looks she cast around were so fierce and dangerous that M. Moriaz began to tremble for his laboratory.

"I implore you," said he, "to have mercy on my poor retorts, my honest stills, my innocent phials! They have nothing to do with the matter. Is it their fault if the stories you tell me upset my mind so much that I cannot master them nor pronounce upon them?"

"Then you do not believe in anything extraordinary?"

"Extraordinary! Whenever I meet anything extraordinary, I salute it," replied he, taking off his cap and making a low bow; "but I ask for its credentials."

"Ah, there you are again. I thought that the investigation had been made."

"It was not conclusive, since it failed to convince Madame de Lorey."

"Oh, who could convince Madame de Lorey? Don't you know what people of the world are, and how they detest whatever astonishes them, whatever is above their comprehension, whatever they cannot weigh in their little scales, or measure with their narrow compasses?"

"Plague take it! you are severe on society; I always fancied you liked it."

"I don't know whether I like it or not; it would certainly be hard for me to do without it, but I may judge it, and I sometimes tell myself that if Christ—~~are you listening to me?~~—were to come among us again followed by His publicans and fishermen, and if Christ were to think of preaching the Sermon on the Mount on the Boulevard des Italiens—"

"Lay the scene at Montmartre at any rate, to make it seem more probable," he interposed. "Frankly, I don't see

the connection between Christ and Count Larinski, and then theology, excuse me, is not my forte. Religion seems to me a good and useful thing, and I am glad to accept Christianity, minus its romantic side, with which I have hardly had time to trouble myself. You will allow at least that if there are genuine miracles, there are spurious ones also. How are we to distinguish between them?"

"That is the province of the heart to decide," said she.

"Oh, the infallibility of the heart!" exclaimed he. "No Council has ever yet voted that."

There was a pause, and then M. Moriaz resumed: "Then, my dear, you are of opinion that M. Larinski is still free, and that Madame de Lorey has been fibbing?"

"Not at all; if she had told a fib, she would not have betrayed herself so naively just now. I accuse her of making a mistake, or rather of wishing to make it. Do you know what you will have to do this very evening, after dinner? You must get into the carriage and drive to—"

"To Paris, Rue Mont-Thabor!" exclaimed he, starting up from his stool. "Very well, I will put on my frock coat and go and say to Count Larinski: My dear sir, I have come to ask your hand for my daughter, who adores you; evil tongues maintain that you are no longer free, but I don't believe it, and besides that is a mere trifle. You shall draw it all up in writing; if I am left to myself, I shall never manage it; when I am out of my professorial chair, I have such a difficulty in finding language!"

"Oh dear! How sharp you are! Who ever thought of such a thing? The Abbé Miollens is a friend of ours; he is a good man in whose testimony we may place confidence."

"Ah, that will do; why did not you explain yourself? Then you need not prepare a speech for me; this is a good idea of yours, I am equal to this conversation. As soon as

I have had dinner this evening, I will go and see the Abbé Miollens ; but it is agreed, is it not ? that if he confirms the sentence —”

“ I shall make no appeal, and I promise further to be more courageous than you expect ; I will put a good face on my trouble, and you shall find it impossible to suspect me of regretting my chimera. Let it be a bargain ; you promise me, on the other hand that—if the Abbé Miollens—”

“ You know, as well as I do, that you are of age.”

“ I know, as well as you do, that I shall never marry without your consent. I say now, as I did in the Engadine, This man or none.”

“ Did not I warn you that when people once pronounce a formula, they go on repeating it ?”

“ Either this man or none, is my last word. Would you not rather have him ? Will you accept him ?”

“ I will submit.”

“ Cheerfully ?”

“ With resignation.”

“ With happy resignation ?”

“ I will do my best, or rather, if he makes you happy, I will honour him all the days of my life ; but if he fails to do this, I shall say to you every night and morning, like Madame de Lorey : You would not listen to me, you ought to have believed me.”

“ It is a bargain, you are a kind father, and we are of one mind,” she replied, and taking both his hands, she clasped them in her own.

He looked her full in the face, and then exclaimed in an angry tone of voice : “ In the name of heaven, what makes you love this man ?”

She replied in a low voice : “ Because I love him ; that is my only reason, but it seems to me a good one.”

“ Peremptory creature—let us go at once,” said he, rising.

"I fear lest my reports should hear you and fall into as prolonged a swoon as M. Larinski's; are such absurdities as these to be discussed in a chemist's laboratory?"

As soon as M. Moriaz rose from table, he prepared at once for going to Maisons, where the Abbé Miollens was spending the summer near Madame de Lorecy's. Mademoiselle Moiseney accompanied him to the carriage and said: "Oh, what an admirable daughter you have, sir! The courage and decision Antoinette has shown! The resolution with which she has buried all thoughts of an impossible happiness! Did you observe her during dinner? How quiet and attentive she was! Don't you think her marvellous?"

"As marvellous as you are sagacious," was his reply.

"Ah, to be sure, I never thought that she loved him as much as you declared; but he pleased her and she took a fancy to him. Did she give vent to one moan or sigh when she learned the cruel truth? What strength of mind, what an equable temper, what nobility of feeling! You don't admire her sufficiently, sir; you are not proud enough of having such a daughter. I take a little credit to myself for having had some share in her education. I always tried to develop her judgment and put her on her guard against all extravagances. Yes, I may venture to say that I took a great deal of pains to cultivate and strengthen her mind."

"I am most grateful to you," rejoined M. Moriaz, ensconcing himself in a corner of the carriage; "you can boast of having achieved a marvellous work; but pray, mademoiselle, when your speech is ended, give notice to the coachman that he may start."

On the way, M. Moriaz indulged in melancholy reflections and reproaches. "We have gone to work in a very foolish way," thought he. "Her imagination was taken by surprise, and she would have quieted down in time. We

should have left her to herself, and to her own safe-guard, her natural good sense, for she has some, after all. Unluckily I thought of calling Madame de Lorey to my aid, and she has spoiled all by her artifices. As soon as Antoinette suspected that we condemned her choice and were plotting against the enemy, the mingled sympathy and admiration she entertained for M. Larinski became love, and the fire concealed beneath the ashes burst into flames. We had forgotten to allow for that innate feminine passion which phrenologists term *combativeness*. Now she feels that she has a stake to win; when love combines with the interest of a game or battle, it becomes irresistible, and so our campaign is gravely compromised, unless heaven or M. Larinski interfere."

Such was the reasoning of M. Moriaz, whom paternal misadventures and his recent experience had rendered a better psychologist than heretofore. But while reasoning, he was living at a good rate, and thirty-five minutes brought him to the door of the little villa where the Abbé Miollens resided. He found him in his study, installed in a comfortable arm-chair, embroidered for him by Madame de Lorey, and sipping a cup of some excellent tea brought him from China by some missionaries. On his left hand lay his violin-case, on his right, his precious Horace, Orelli's edition, Zurich, 1844.

Conversation began. As soon as M. Moriaz mentioned Count Larinski's name, the abbé assumed the delighted and attentive air of a dog that sees his favourite game pass and pounce.

"What a wonderful man!" he exclaimed.

"Mercy on me," thought M. Moriaz, "here is another scordium strongly resembling Mademoiselle Moiseney's. Am I to be condemned for ever to forced admiration? I fear there is some mental bond of union between our

friend the abbé, and that fool of a woman; he may be her cousin."

"How much obliged to you I am, dear sir," pursued the Abbé Miollens, settling himself in his chair, "for having led us to make the acquaintance of such an uncommon man! It was you who introduced him to us, or rather the credit is yours of having discovered and invented him."

"Oh, pray do not exaggerate," replied M. Moriaz, humbly, "he invented himself."

"At any rate, it was you that patronized him and brought him out; without you, the world would never have suspected the existence of this great genius and noble character, concealed like a violet beneath the wayside grass."

"They must be cousins," said M. Moriaz to himself.

"And see here," continued the abbé, "would you believe that I have found an exact portrait of M. Larinski in Horace? Yes, Horace has drawn him most minutely in the person of Lollius, Marcus Lollius, you know, to whom he addresses Ode ix. of book iv., and who was consul 733 A.U.C. The resemblance is most striking, as I will show you."

He put down his cup, and taking the book in his right hand, while with the forefinger of the left he complacently underlined the beauties of the text or pressed his lip, he said: "What do you say to this? 'Your soul is wise,' writes Horace to Lollius, 'and resists the temptations of prosperity with as much constancy as those of adversity, *est animus tibi et secundis temporibus dubusque rectus.*' Is not that Count Larinski? But stop, Lollius detested fraud and cupidity, and despised money which seduces all men, '*abstinens lucentia et se cuncta pecunia.*' This is a most striking trait; between ourselves, I think our dear count despises money a little too much, he turns from it with aversion, and hates its very name, he is 'an Epictetus, a Diogenes, an ancient

anchorite who would have lived happily in the Thebaid. He told us himself that a glass of toast and water and a dinner at the Café Anglais were all the same to him. I have not yet finished. 'Happy,' exclaims Horace, 'is he who can endure the hardships of poverty without complaint, *qui durum cullet pauperiem pati*?' Of whom is he speaking, of Lollius, or of our friend, who not only endures his poverty, but loves and cherishes it as a lover adores his mistress? And what do you think of this final trait? Lollius was always ready to die for his country, '*non ille pro patria timidus perire.*' Now, really, is not that singular? Might we not fancy that Horace had known Count Larinski at Rome or at Tibur?"

"I have not the slightest doubt of it," replied M. Moriaz, taking the book from the abbé's hands and laying it respectfully on the table. "Fortunately, our friend Larinski, as you call him, wisely thought of returning to life about thirty years since, which has procured us the pleasure of meeting him at St. Moritz, and since we are on this subject— My dear abbé, is your mind free? Can you attend to me? I want to put a question to you, and ask you to enlighten me. I don't apply to you merely as a friend, but as a confessor, a director of consciences, the man in whose discretion I have the utmost confidence."

"I am all attention," returned the abbé, throwing himself back in his arm-chair, and crossing his long slender legs, of which he was proud.

M. Moriaz plunged at once into his subject. The abbé was some time in guessing his drift. As soon as it dawned upon him, his face lengthened, and uncrossing his legs, he exclaimed: "What a pity! You must renounce the realisation of your beautiful dream. I feel greatly distressed about it. I can enter into the joy with which you would have seen your charming daughter devote, I will not say her fortune, for

you know, as well as I, how little Count Larinski would value that, but her grace, her beauty, and all the virtues of her angelic nature, to secure the happiness of a man of rare merits, whom providence has severely tried. She loves him, and is loved by him, heaven would have blessed their union—What a pity! I repeat that the marriage is impossible, our friend is already married.”

“Are you quite sure?” exclaimed M. Moriaz, with a burst of enthusiasm, which the good abbé took for the climax of despair.

“I am distressed to give you such pain. Am I sure of it? I have it from our friend’s own lips. One night, something, I forget what, led me to ask: Are you married, count? He replied curtly: I thought I had told you so. Ah, my dear professor, I won’t answer for the marriage being a happy one, but that has nothing to do with this business.”

“Well, this is positive,” replied M. Moriaz hastily, “and I am not prepared to dispute the evidence.”

“Alas, no,” returned the abbé, but after deliberating a few seconds, and making a pause, he added: “Nevertheless——”

“Nevertheless—nothing, you may be sure that your word is enough for me.”

“But supposing I had misunderstood——”

“I have perfect confidence in your ears; they are excellent.”

“Allow me, we must not despair too readily. Count Larinski called this afternoon when I was out, I ought to bid him good bye. To-morrow morning I promise to go to him.”

“What is the use?” put in M. Moriaz, “I am heartily obliged by your kindness, but heaven preserve me from breaking unnecessarily on your occupations; your time

is so valuable! I declare I am perfectly satisfied, it would be unbecoming to ask for further proof; I accept it, and there is no more to be said."

As Madame de Lorey had observed, the Abbé Miollens was not ready to abandon any idea which approved itself to his mind. In vain did M. Moriaz combat his proposition, cursing in his heart such excess of zeal; the abbé would not relinquish it, and M. Moriaz was forced to give in. It was settled that the worthy man should call on Count Larinski next day, and that he should come direct from Paris to Corneilles to communicate the results of his mission to those interested.

M. Moriaz saw that this arrangement presented the advantage of Antoinette's learning the fatal truth from the abbé's own lips; he left him with a recommendation to be most circumspect, as wise as a serpent and as discreet as a confessional box. Then he took his leave in tolerable spirits, being hopeful as to the future, and being in altogether a different humour; the road from Maisons to Corneilles seemed very much pleasanter than that from Corneilles to Maisons.

Samuel Brohl was seated before an empty trunk, which he was doubtless about to pack, when he heard a knock at his door. He went to open it, and found himself face to face with the Abbé Miollens. From their very first interview, Samuel Brohl had conceived for the abbé that warm sympathy and ready liking which he felt for those in whom he thought he recognised serviceable people, whom he might turn to account, and who seemed visibly predestinated to be of essential use to him. He was hardly ever mistaken; he was skilled in diagnostics, and could read the divine mark of predestination on a face at the first glance. He received his reverend friend most cordially, and ushered him all the more warmly into his modest apartments because of

the singular, mysterious, and rather agitated manner he noticed about him. "Can he have come as a diplomatic agent, charged with some extraordinary mission?" he asked himself.

The discerning abbé, on his side, studied Samuel Brohl without appearing to do so. He was struck by his countenance, which at this moment expressed a manly, melancholy pride. His eyes occasionally betrayed the secret of an heroic sorrow, which had sworn to keep silence before men and confess itself only to God.

They sat down and began to talk, the abbé leading the conversation at first to indifferent topics. Samuel Brohl listened and replied with melancholy grace. Great as his curiosity was, he was always able to control his impatience. Samuel Brohl was never in a hurry, Samuel Brohl knew how to wait: he had proved it during the past month, and it is a gift which many a diplomatist lacks.

The Abbé Miollens' visit had reached the ordinary limits of a call, and he seemed about to rise, when, pointing to the open valise, he said: "These preparations distress me. I had intended to invite you to Maisons, my dear count; I had a room to offer you. *Hoc erat in votis*, I should have been delighted to have you for a guest. We should have talked and played every evening, close to a window opening on a garden. *Hæc latebræ dulces, etiam, si credis, amœnæ*. Alas, you are ungrateful, you will leave us. Vienna must have great attractions for you!—But no doubt you have a pleasant home awaiting you, a charming wife, and perhaps children—"

Samuel looked at him with an astonished and startled air, as he had looked at Madame de Lorey when she spoke to him of the Countess Larinski.

"What do you mean?" asked he.

"Why! Did not you yourself tell me that you were wedded?"

Samuel opened his eyes ; for some moments he seemed to ponder ; then striking his forehead and smiling, " Oh, I see," he exclaimed. " You took my words literally. I thought you would have understood me. No, my dear abbé, I am not married and never shall be ; but there are voluntary unions as sacred and indissoluble as marriage."

The abbé frowned, and his face assumed a severe expression of annoyance. He was about to read his dear count a sermon under three heads, against immorality and the dangers of voluntary unions, but Samuel gave him no time.

" I am not going to Vienna to meet my mistress," he resumed. " She never leaves me, she accompanies me everywhere—she is here."

The Abbé Miollens cast a startled glance around, expecting to see a woman come out of some cupboard or from behind a curtain.

" I tell you that she is here," repeated Samuel Brohl, and he pointed to an alabaster figure mounted on a pedestal. The abbé went up to it. The statuette represented a woman bound with cords, and two Cossacks flogging her with the knout ; the base bore this inscription : *Polonia vineta et flagellata*.

The abbé's face relaxed in an instant, his brow unbent, his mouth expanded, and his eyes sparkled with joy. " How well it was I came," thought he, " and how much obliged M. Moriaz will be to me !"

Turning towards Samuel, he exclaimed ; " I am a perfect fool, I fancied— Ah, I understand now, your mistress is Poland, I prefer that, and this is indeed a voluntary union as sacred as marriage. It has the further advantage of being no hindrance. Poland is not jealous, and should you chance to meet a woman worthy of you and long to marry her, your mistress would make no objections. Let us rather call her,

not your mistress, but your mother, and reasonable mothers never prevent their sons from marrying."

Samuel Brohl in his turn assumed a grave stern look, and replied, with his eyes fixed steadily on the statuette: "You are mistaken, I am hers, and have no right to dispose of my heart, my soul, or my life; my last thoughts and my last drop of blood belong to her. I am as much bound by the oaths I have sworn to her as a monk can be by his vows."

"Excuse me, my dear count," said the abbé; this is sheer fanaticism, if I know anything about it. When have patriots ever vowed to remain single? Their first duty is to raise children who shall be good citizens. When there are no more Poles, Poland will be no more."

Samuel Brohl interrupted him by seizing his arm and saying with a bitter smile: "Take a good look at me; don't I look like an adventurer?"

The abbé protested.

"Does the word scandalise you?" continued Samuel. "Well, I am a man of adventure, born to be always on the wing. Marriage was not invented for men who run risks." He added in a tragic voice: "You know what is going on in Bosnia. Who can be certain that a general war may not break out presently, and who can foresee its consequences? I must hold myself in readiness for that day. Perhaps an inscrutable Providence may shortly afford me another opportunity of risking my life for my country; perhaps Poland may call me, crying: 'Come, I have need of thee!' If I were to reply: 'Times have changed, I have given my heart to a woman who holds me in bondage; I have now a roof, a family, a home, and precious bonds which I cannot break;' would not Poland, I ask, be justified in saying: 'Thou hast broken thine oath, thou hast denied me, and I curse thee!'"

The Abbé Miollens had just taken a pinch of snuff, and as

he listened to this speech, he tapped his fingers on the lid of his beautiful gold snuff-box, a present from his most charming penitent.

"Is your conscience perfectly easy on this score, my dear friend? for you will allow me, I trust, to call you so," was his reply. "Are you sure that your conscience does not reproach you? Are you sure that your heart has remained perfectly faithful to its mistress? If I am to believe what I hear, a rather strange scene occurred at Madame de Lorey's yesterday."

Samuel Brohl started, changed colour, and buried his face in his hands, probably to hide from the abbé the blushes with which remorse dyed his cheeks. He murmured in a low voice: "Not another word; you have touched a deep wound!"

"Then it is true that you love Mademoiselle Antoinette Moriaz?" resumed the abbé.

"I had sworn that she should never suspect it," replied Samuel, in accents of the deepest contrition. "Yesterday I was so abominably weak as to betray myself. Heavens! what must she think of me?" And while speaking thus with his face buried in his hands, he opened his fingers gently and fixed his brilliant eyes,—which could see as well as a cat's in the dark—upon the abbé.

"What does she think of you?" said the abbé, taking another pinch. "Why, my dear count, women are never angry with a man for fainting under the influence of their charming eyes, and especially when the man is a hero, a Knight of the Round Table. I have reason to believe that Mademoiselle Moriaz is not displeased with you on account of your accident. Shall I tell you what I think? I should not be surprised if you had touched her heart, and if, supposing you took the trouble, you might not some day flatter yourself with the hope of gaining her love."

At that moment the voice of Samuel Brohl's reverend friend seemed to him the most harmonious music. He felt a delightful thrill run through his body. The abbé had told him nothing new; but there are things of which we feel certain, things that we have told ourselves hundreds of times, which have nevertheless the effect of novelty when we hear them for the first time from another's lips.

"Are you not deceiving me?" cried Samuel, beside himself with joy. "What, can it be true—I might hope some day—some day she might judge me worthy.—Oh, what visions you conjure up! You are both kind and cruel! What bitters are mixed with the sweet delight of your words! No, I could never have believed that grief could contain so much joy, and joy so much grief."

"What do you mean, my dear count?" resumed the abbé. "Do you want a negotiator? I may boast of having some experience. I am quite at your service."

These words brought Samuel Brohl back to his senses. He drew himself up and answered coldly: "A negotiator? What should I want with a negotiator? Do not flatter me with idle fancies, and above all do not ask me to sacrifice my honour to them. I must renounce for ever the superlative felicity you venture to offer me, I have told you why."

The Abbé Miollens was rather vexed, and took upon himself to scold and lecture his noble friend. He remonstrated with him upon having too much sternness of principle, upon carrying virtue to exaggeration, and upon showing overmuch refinement in the exquisite delicacy of his conscience. He pointed out how fine minds ought to be on their guard against being carried away by sentiment. He quoted the Testament and Bossuet, as well as his beloved Horace, who censured whatever was exaggerated, and advised the wise to shun all extremes. His reasoning availed nothing against the other's unalterable resolution; Samuel stood firm as a

rock against every remonstrance, and at length closed the abbé's lips by saying :

"Pray respect my folly, which is certainly wisdom in God's sight. I am no longer free, I repeat, and even if I were, do you not know that there is an insurmountable obstacle between Mademoiselle Moriaz and myself?"

"What is that?" asked the abbé.

"Her fortune and my pride," replied Samuel. "She is rich and I am poor, this adorable creature was not made for me. I told Madame de Lorey one day what I thought of this kind of alliance or bargain. Yes, my revered friend, I love Mademoiselle Moriaz with an ardent passion for which I reproach myself as if it were a crime. All I can do is never to see her again, and I never will see her again. Let me follow my gloomy, solitary path to the end. I shall have one consolation; I shall tell myself that happiness was not rejected me, that my conscience, warned from on high, refused it: and that there is a divine sweetness in great sacrifices, and a blessing in great trials accepted in a religious spirit. Believe me, God is speaking to me now, as He once spoke to me at San Francisco: enjoining me to leave all and give my blood for my country. I recognise His voice commanding my heart to be silent and sacrifice itself. God and Poland! I must recognise nothing else but these."

And turning again to the statuette, he cried, "I will lay my painful sacrifice at her feet, she shall heal my broken and wounded heart."

Samuel Brohl spoke in a quivering voice, his divine aspirations caused the hair of his head to stand up and brought tears to his eyes. The good abbé's eyes were also moist, he was deeply touched, and cast wide-eyed glances at this hero, filled with admiration for his antique type of character and heavenly mind. He had never met with any-

thing to equal it in Horace's odes or epistles, Lollius himself was surpassed. Transported with admiration, he opened both arms to Samuel Brohl, extending them wide as if he feared they would not be able to contain so great a man, and exclaimed as he pressed him to his heart: "Ah, my dear count, what a grand, what a wonderful man you are!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE Abbé Miollons hastened to repair to Cormeilles and give a detailed account of his conference with Count Larnski. Having come direct from the interview, he accorded free vent to his enthusiasm, and sang the praises of this antique mind, this heavenly soul, which had just revealed to him its hidden treasures. M. Moriaz astonished and shocked him greatly by saying: "You are right, this Polo is a wonderful man, worthy of being canonized or hanged, I don't exactly know which."

Antoinette did not say a word, but kept her reflections to herself. She retired to her room, and walked up and down for some time, uncertain, or rather anxious, about what she was going to do. Again and again she went up to her writing-table and looked at her desk; then a scruple seized her, and she walked away. At last she came to a decision, took up her pen, and wrote as follows:

"Sir,—Before starting for Vienna, pray be so good as to come to Cormeilles for a few minutes. I wish to have an interview with you in my father's presence. Yours very sincerely,
ANTOINETTE MORIAZ."

The following morning she received the expected reply by the first post, it ran as follows :

"The trial would be too great for my courage. I shall not see you again, if I did, I should be a lost man."

This short note caused Mademoiselle Moriaz bitter disappointment and a little anger. She was holding a paint-brush in her hand, and she snapped the handle in two, as if to console herself for her inability to bend Count Abel Larinski's proud and stubborn will. Is iron or a diamond to be bent ? The postman had put into her hands another letter, which she opened mechanically for duty's sake. She ran her eyes over the first few lines without taking in a word that she read. Suddenly her attention was aroused, her face lighted up, her eyes sparkled. This letter, sent her by a merciful Providence as a last resource in her distress, came from Mademoiselle Galet, and the ex-flower-maker of the Rue Mouffetard wrote as follows :

"My dear young lady,—I hear that you have returned : how glad I am, and how I long to see you again ! You are my guardian angel, I wish to see you every day of my life, and the time has seemed very long. When you enter the poor invalid's garret, she feels as if there were three suns in the sky ; when you leave her, the noon becomes night. Madame de Lorey has been very kind to me. She came a fortnight ago, as my angel had requested her, to pay my last quarter's allowance. She is a very charitable lady, and splendidly dressed, but rather hard on poor people. She asks a great many questions, and wants to know everything. She told me that I spent too much, and was fond of luxuries, and you know whether that is true or not. She is not aware how things have risen in price, how dear meat and potatoes are, and that eggs cost a franc and a half the dozen

just now. Besides, a poor creature like myself, without the use of her legs, cannot do her own marketing. The woman who does up my place may not understand how to buy; I scold her tremendously if by any chance she brings me things when they first come in; God knows that I care very little about my eating.

"This kind Madame de Lorey scolded me too about a bouquet of camellias which she saw on my table, precisely similar to the one for which I thanked my angel; I don't know what she must have thought. Well, my dear young lady, I have since learned that these double camellias, red striped with white, were sent by a man, for men are now beginning to give me bouquets and pay me visits; rather late in the day, is it not? The one I am speaking of introduced himself one morning, saying that you had mentioned me, and he wished to ascertain that I was well and wanted for nothing. He has been here several times since, and always brought me some luxury. The best thing he ever brought was the news of my angel's return. What a man he is! He might have come direct from heaven. One night when I was ill, he gave me my medicine himself, and would have sat up to nurse me, if I would have allowed him. You must tell me who he is, for I am most curious to know. He has a head like a lion, and looks as generous as he is handsome, but very sad. He must have some great trouble. Unfortunately I shall not have him to spoil me any more; it will be all over soon. He leaves in two days, and has told me that he will come to bid me good-bye to-morrow afternoon.

"You will see soon, won't you, my dear young lady? I am dying to embrace you, since you allow me to take that liberty. I am your sun, and my angel, and I am your most humble and devoted servant,

LOUISE GALET."

Mademoiselle Louise Galet's letter contained nothing that was inaccurate, except perhaps the passage about the tremendous scoldings she gave her charwoman for buying things early in the season. If the good lady's antecedents were not perfectly irreproachable, she had still some principle and never told falsehoods; but she did not tell the whole truth, and omitted some details in her story.

She had not cared to add a postscript to say how well she had been paid for her letter. It had been written at Samuel Brohl's instigation, though he had not enlightened her as to his object. She had partly guessed it, being tolerably acute. He had committed himself to her discretion, and paid her in solid coin. It was a good round sum; Mademoiselle Galet refused it at first, but ended by accepting it with tender gratitude. Presents and short reckonings make good friends.

A daring idea suddenly occurred to Mademoiselle Moriaz; there was no time to be lost, and she was no longer one to shrink from an act of audacity. She ordered the horses to be put to. M. Moriaz had just gone out to make a call on a neighbour, and, taking advantage of his absence, she begged Mademoiselle Moiseney to put on her bonnet at once and accompany her to Paris, as she wanted to see her dressmaker. In ten minutes she was in the carriage, and had told the coachman to drive as fast as he could.

The dressmaker did not detain her long, and from the Rue de la Paix, she was driven on to No. 27 Rue Mouffetard. She never suffered Mademoiselle Moiseney, whose wind was not good, to climb after her to the fifth floor where Mademoiselle Galet lived; she gave her express commands to remain below, and wait quietly for her in the carriage.

She ascended the stairs nimbly, and met a servant on the way, who informed her that Mademoiselle Galet, not being very well, had lain down on her bed and was having a

nap, but that she would find the key in the door. The apartments she was about to enter consisted of three rooms, an ante-room which served as a kitchen, a small sitting-room and a bedroom. She paused a few moments in the ante-room to take breath, to summon up courage, and collect her thoughts, for she had guessed that there was some one in the next room. She entered it and found, not Mademoiselle Galet, but the man whom she had come in search of. He was apparently waiting for the occupant of the apartments to awake. On catching sight of the woman whom he had sworn never to set eyes on again, he shuddered and glanced all round to find some means of escape, but there was none. Antoinette was standing in front of the doorway and barred the passage. She looked at him and felt almost certain of her victory; he looked like a conquered man, and his defeat seemed a total overthrow.

She folded her arms, assumed a smiling expression, and said to the count in a steady voice, and slightly bantering tone: "So this is the way you steal my poor people from me! It is to deck them with flowers, certainly. Own that there is a little hypocrisy in your virtue: Mademoiselle Galet never suspected that you were giving those famous camellias to *me*! Sixty franc bouquets, what madness? How you despise money! How is that you do not despise mine? You are afraid of it, and dare not touch it lest it should burn your fingers. Will you not help me to throw it out of the window? Your poor people and mine shall pick it up. Come, won't you? My fortune is not so very large, but I am sure that I cannot spend it all myself; there is enough for two, for two who would be but one. Cannot you consent to this division? Your pride forbids it. You acted a part the other day, you do not really love me. It costs so little to be under obligations to those we love."

He made a gesture of despair and exclaimed: "I implore you to let me go."

"Presently; I want to tell you what I think first. I take but little account of your pretended pride, it is haughtiness, and this you make your idol, a pitiful idol! And as to Poland—"

He gave a start. After a pause she continued: "It is she herself who gives or rather lends you to me. I promise you that if she is over in need of you, I will say to her, 'Here, take him again,' and to you, 'Go, she claims you. But pray speak to me and look at me, it will not hurt you. Are you afraid of me? Have the courage to tell me to my face what you have said to other people.'"

He sank back in a chair, and with his head bent down and his arms hanging by his side, murmured: "I was sure that if I saw you again, I should be lost."

"Say rather, saved, your mind was diseased, I have healed you. I can work miracles; you once took the trouble to write that to me. Will you take my hand? it pledges you to nothing, you can easily withdraw yours."

He took the hand she held out, not raising it to his lips, but holding it in his own.

"Listen to me," she resumed. "This very day, and very soon, you are to start for Cornuilles and to say to my father: She has offered me her hand, I wish to keep it, give it me. Do you consent? Will you obey me?"

He cried: "You are here and you speak to me, the world has vanished and I hear no other voice!"

"That is right. When people enter into explanations, they come to an understanding; but to bring this about the essential part is to see one another. Since you are so sensible when you see me, I wish you to keep me always in sight. Take this!"

She gave him a locket containing her likeness and went

towards the door. At the threshold she turned round, and said: "Tell Mademoiselle Galet that I would not disturb her, and that I shall come again to-morrow. Mademoiselle Moiseney will be tired of waiting for me. I have your promise, to-night! I am going."

And away she fled.

The coachman drove back with the same speed that he had come, and they reached Cormeilles before the soup had had time to cool. Yet M. Moriaz had had time to grow anxious. He did not sit down to table without questioning Mademoiselle Moiseney, who knowing nothing, could give him no information; still she replied in the mysterious manner beneath which she always veiled her ignorance. He determined therefore to question Antoinette after dinner. She forestalled him, however, by taking him aside and telling him what had transpired.

"I presume," said she, "that you will now believe in his pride and disinterestedness. I had told you that I should have to go on my knees to induce him to marry me."

He could not restrain a movement of indignation.

"Oh, be consoled," she went on to say, "that is a mere figure of speech. He was at my feet and I was standing."

M. Moriaz opened and closed his mouth three times without uttering a syllable. He contented himself by making a gesture which meant: "The die is cast; let us await the event."

Samuel Brohl had been careful to keep his word. After making a scrupulous toilet, he had taken the train to Argenteuil, and there hired a carriage. He arrived at Cormeilles just as it struck nine. He was shown into the drawing-room, where M. Moriaz sat awaiting him reading the newspaper. Samuel was pale and his lips quivered with emotion. He bowed low to M. Moriaz, saying: "I feel myself guilty, sir; pray refuse what I ask."

M. Moriaz's reply was : " Well, sir, I may say that you are come, in the words of Scripture, like a thief in the night, but I have nothing to refuse you. I must own that you are not the son-in-law I had thought of, but that is no matter, my daughter is her own mistress, and I have no reason to believe her mistaken in her choice. You are a man of taste and honour, and you know the value of what you are about to receive. If you make Antoinette happy, I shall be your warm friend. Now I have said all, let us consider your reply as made and talk of other things."

Samuel Brohl took the hint, and did not insist on replying, but talked of other things. He could be pleasant as well as dignified. He made himself as agreeable and charming as his strong emotion would allow. M. Moriaz was forced to own to himself that Count Larinski was as good company at Corneilles as at St. Moritz, and had no other fault than that of wishing to become his son-in-law.

Their conversation was prolonged. Antoinette, meanwhile, was walking in front of the house, inhaling the jasmine-scented air, and pouring out her heart to the night and the stars. The only thing that disturbed her happy reverie was the incessant flight of a bat, which kept flitting from one end of the terrace to the other, on its quivering wings. The inclean beast seemed to haunt her, it persisted in flying round her, and brushed her hair as it passed ; Antoinette thought she could distinguish its hideous face and long ears, and drew back with a shudder.

She heard a step upon the gravel. Samuel Brohl had taken leave of M. Moriaz and was crossing the terrace on his way to his carriage. He recognised Antoinette, came up to her, and clasped a bracelet which he held in his hand round her wrist, saying : " Why cannot I give you anything as valuable as the locket which you have deigned to bestow on me, and which I shall always carry about with me ? Yet

this trinket is of some value in my eyes. My mother was fond of it, and always refused to part with it, even in her utmost need; it was on her arm when she died."

We are never perfectly consistent, and there is no human clay without some grains of gold. Designing men, and even villains, are capable of a passing sentiment that is pure and sincere; on some occasions, every man is better than himself. The upper part of Mademoiselle Moriaz's face was shrouded in her hood, the lower was illumined by the moon now rising above the hills; Samuel Brohl contemplated the face and hood in silence, and felt that Antoinette was as beautiful as a spirit. For two minutes, he forgot that she had a hundred thousand francs a year, and that, according to all probability, M. Moriaz would die some day. He was absorbed in the thought that this woman loved him and would soon be his own. Yes, for two minutes, Samuel Brohl was as passionately in love with Mademoiselle Moriaz as Count Lariński could have been.

He could not resist the feeling by which he was carried away. He twined his arms round Antoinette's supple waist and planted a burning kiss, a true Polish kiss, on the roots of her hair. She made no resistance; but at this moment, the bat who had already annoyed her by its attentions, returned to the charge, struck her full in the face, and was caught in her hood. Antoinette felt the chill of its membranous wings and hooked claws. She snatched off her hood and threw it to a distance. Samuel Brohl darted to pick it up, pressed it to his lips, and fled like a thief carrying away his booty.

When Antoinette re-entered the drawing-room, she found it occupied by Mademoiselle Moiseney, whose noisy and distracted ~~body~~ had just put M. Moriaz to flight. This time, Mademoiselle Moiseney knew all. She had seen Samuel Brohl arrive, and had been unable to resist her over-strained

curiosity; she had felt no scruples about eavesdropping. She pounced upon Antoinette, pressed her to her heart, and cried: "Oh, my dear, my dear! Did not I always say it would end so?"

Mademoiselle Moriaz hastened to free herself from these embraces; she wanted to be alone. When she regained her own room, she walked round it; the furniture, the what-nots laden with ornaments, the pink and white striped silk hangings, the muslin curtains of her bed, and the large silver crucifix suspended from the wall opposite, seemed to look at her with astonishment, questioning her, and saying: "What can have happened?" She answered: "You are right, something has happened."

She stood in contemplation before a portrait of her mother, whom she had lost very young. "I am told," said she, "that you were a great reader of novels. I am not fond of them, and never read them; but I have just taken part in a romance that would have satisfied you. This man would have astonished you a little, and pleased you still more. A few hours ago, he was lost to me for ever. I was bold, and went in search of him, and when he saw me, he surrendered. He was with me on the terrace just now. His lips touched me here, at the roots of my hair, and I trembled from head to foot. Do not be indignant; they are pure and loyal lips! The sacred fire has touched them; they have never lied, none but proud and noble words fall from them, they speak modestly of a blameless life. Why are you not with me? I have a thousand things to tell you, which you alone could understand, no one else understands me."

She began to undress. After taking down her hair, she remembered that there was One in the room who understands all, and to whom she had not yet spoken. She knelt down, with bare shoulders, and joining her hands and fixing her eyes on the silver crucifix, said in a low voice:

"Forgive me for forgetting Thee, Thou who hast never forgotten me. Praise be to Thee, Thou hast heard my desires, and given me the bliss of which I dreamed without daring to ask it. Happy indeed I am, perfectly happy. I promise Thee to shed my joy over the humble and wretched in this world; I will love them more than I have yet done. When meat and drink are given to them, they are given to Thyself, and when flowers are given them, the crown of thorns which made Thy brow to bleed bursts forth into bloom. I will give them flowers and bread. Thou art not a jealous God, whatever they may say. Full as my heart may be, Thou knowest the place reserved for Thee, and that whenever Thou knockest at the door, I shall cry, 'Enter, the house and all that therein is is Thine;' my happiness blesses Thee, bless Thou it!"

While Mademoiselle Moriaz was communing with a crucifix, Samuel Brohl was rolling along the three miles odd of high road between Cormeilles and Argenteuil. He carried his head high, his eyes sparkled, his temples throbbed, and he felt as if his expanded breast could contain the world. He spoke to himself, murmuring the self-same words again and again. "She is mine!" said he to the passers-by, to the vines by the roadside, to the hill of Sannois, and the Trouillet mill, which rose in faint outline against the sky. "She is mine!" said he to the moon, which shone that night for him alone, its sole occupation being to gaze on Samuel Brohl. It was easy to see that it was in the secret, it knew that Samuel Brohl was to marry Mademoiselle Moriaz before long, and was so charmed that it had dressed itself in its best, in honour of this wonderful event, and its great orange face beamed with sympathy and joy.

Although Samuel had charged his coachman to drive at full speed, he missed the last train, and so decided to sleep at Argenteuil. He threw himself upon the hospitality

of the *Cœur-Volant*, and ordered a great bowl of punch, his favourite beverage. He went to bed expecting to have delightful dreams; but his slumbers were disturbed by a very disagreeable incident. Fine days are often followed by bad nights, and the *Cœur-Volant* inn was destined to leave an unfavourable impression on Samuel Brohl's mind.

Towards four o'clock in the morning, he heard a knock at his door, and a familiar voice crying: "Come, let me in!" He was seized with horrible anguish; he felt paralysed and could scarcely raise himself up. He remembered that he had bolted himself in, a reflection which was reassuring. Great, however, was his stupefaction on seeing the bolt slide back in its sockets! The door opened, some one entered, walked slowly up to Samuel, drew back the bed curtains, and bent over him with the large eyes and steady gaze that he knew so well. They were strange eyes, full of both gentleness and fire, audacity and candour, a combination of the child, the genius, and the madman.

Samuel Brohl shivered; he tried to speak, but his tongue felt numb. He made a great effort to loosen it; at length he managed to move his lips and murmured: "Is it you, Abel? I thought you were dead."

Count Abel, the true Abel Larinski, was evidently not dead. He stood erect, his eyes were terribly wide open, and his complexion had never been brighter. It seemed as though he had been buried alive and had made his way out. He had brought away some mould from his grave; his hair was dusted over with a curious sort of earthy powder, and he kept shaking it off at intervals.

Yet there was nothing wild or alarming in his expression, an ironical, mocking smile, played round his lips. After a long silence, he said to Samuel: "Yes, it is I. You were not expecting me, I suppose?"

"Are you quite sure that you are not dead?" replied Samuel.

"Perfectly sure," answered he, shaking his head again to get rid of the dust, which annoyed him. "Am I disturbing you, Samuel Brohl?" he continued. "For your name is Samuel Brohl, a pretty name. Why have you assumed mine? Give it me back."

"Not to-day," replied Samuel in a stifled voice, "nor to-morrow, nor the day after, but after my marriage."

Count Abel burst out laughing, which was contrary to his habits, and surprised Samuel greatly. Then he exclaimed: "She is going to marry me, her name will be the Countess Larinski."

Suddenly the door re-opened, and Mademoiselle Antoinette Moriaz appeared, dressed in white like a bride, with a wreath on her head and a bouquet in her hand. She was coming up to Samuel, but the ghost stopped her on the way, saying: "It is not he whom you love, but my story. Don't you see that he is a sham Pole? His father was a German and kept a public-house, where this great man, this hero, was brought up. I will tell you—"

Samuel laid his hand on the speaker's mouth and stammered out: "Please, please say nothing."

The apparition paid no attention, but went on speaking: "Yes, Samuel Brohl is a hero. For five years he was an old woman's paid lover, and discharged all the duties of his calling. This kept hero earned his money. Would you like to be called Madame Brohl?"

With these words he held out his arms to Mademoiselle Moriaz, who fixed her tender and astonished eyes upon him, and drawing her to him, kissed her hair and wreath.

Then Samuel Brohl recovered strength, life, and motion. He jumped from his bed, and, clenching his fist, darted towards Abel Larinski to dispute his prize. Suddenly he

stopped short with a start; he had heard a sharp chuckling laugh, proceeding from the opposite corner of the room. He turned and caught sight of his father, wearing a greasy cap on his head and wrapped in a dirty caftan, worn threadbare. It was Jeremiah Brohl; all the world was coming back to life that night. The little old man went on chuckling, and then exclaimed in a sharp, grating voice: "*Schandbube! vermaledeiter Schlingel! ich will ich zu Brei schlagen!*" which means; "You wretch, you young blackguard, I will beat you to a jelly!" This was a phrase which Samuel had often heard in his childhood; but accustomed as he might have been to these paternal amenities, when he saw his father raise his clenched withered hand above his head, he screamed and threw himself back to avoid the blow, and catching his feet in the legs of a chair, stumbled and fell violently against a table.

He opened his eyes and saw no one. He ran to the window and threw open the shutters; the early dawn cast its grey light over the room. Thank heaven, there was no one there. The vision had been so real that it was some time before Samuel Brohl could recover himself, and feel sure that his nightmare had vanished for ever, that phantoms are phantoms, and that graves do not give up their dead. When he had arrived at this happy conviction, he spoke to the dead man whose troublesome visit had so greatly disturbed his slumbers, and said haughtily with an air of defiance: "You must submit, my dear Abel, we shall not meet again till we meet in the Valley of Jehoshaphat; I saw a score of shovels full of earth thrown on you; you are dead, I am alive and she is mine."

With this, he hastened to pay his bill and quit the *Cœur-Volant*, promising himself never to enter it again.

At the same moment, M. Moriaz, who rose early, was writing the following letter:

"It is all over, my dear friend, I have given in and cannot

retract. Do not reproach me for my weakness; what could I do? When a man has been the most submissive of fathers for twenty years, he cannot break his bonds in a day; I have never dabbled in revolutions and am too old to learn now. And then who knows if her heart may not have guided her right, so that she may one day prove us all mistaken? "

"I must confess that there is some fascination about this dreadful man. I only find one fault in him: he has no business to exist, a serious fault certainly, but up to now I can reproach him with nothing else.

"When a battle is lost, it is useless to think of anything but beating an orderly retreat. I am sorry to say that Count Larinski is furnished with all the necessary documents, he has his baptismal register and the certificates of his parents' deaths by him. No objection is to be made on this score, and my future son-in-law will not help me to gain time. The point to which we must now devote our whole attention is the settlement. We cannot take too many precautions or tie up everything too safely; this Pole must have his hands thoroughly bound. If you will allow me, I shall ask you to come one of these days and confer with me and my lawyer, who is yours also. I venture to hope that on this point Antoinette will consent to be guided by our advice.

"I am not in good spirits, dear friend; but, being born a philosopher, I take the evils of life patiently and am going to read *Le Monde comme il va ou la vision de Babouc*, over again, to try and persuade myself that if everything is not agreeable, it is at least bearable."

On the evening of that same day, M. Moriaz received the following reply:

"I shall never forget you. You are a great chemist, I allow, but a pitiful father. Your weakness, which deserves

another name, is inexcusable. You ought to have resisted and held out firmly to the end; Antoinette would never have made up her mind to act contrary to your commands. She would have flown into a passion, sulked, and tried to touch your feelings by looking like a disconsolate widow, and she would have dressed herself in crape. What then? What harm would it have done you? Inconsolable Artemisias are very tiresome, I admit, but you can accustom yourself to anything. Ought philosophers, who are indifferent in reality to all things, to be at the mercy of a pouting face and a black crape dress? Besides, black is very fashionable wear now, even out of mourning.

“What do you mean by talking of settlements! You are joking. How can you think of mistrusting a Pole, and taking precautions against a hero of antiquity (as the Abbé Miollens calls him), a grand and noble soul? The very idea of your mistrusting his disinterestedness would make M. Larinski swoon, as he swooned in my drawing-room; this is his plan of action, and a good one too, since it answers. No settlements, I say; let there be a communion of goods, and leave the issue to Providence! There is no beauty or merit in a folly unless it be complete. Ah, my dear man, Poland is charming, is it not? Very well then, bolt it down whole. —I remain your humble servant.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE pitiless sentence pronounced by Madame de Lorey annoyed M. Moriaz, but did not discourage him. He felt that, whatever she might say, precautions are excellent that though we must bear our ills patiently, we may try to alleviate them, that mitigated follies may be preferred to complete follies, and a bad cold to an inflammation of the lungs which may carry off the sufferer. "Time and I can do anything," said Philip II. proudly. M. Moriaz said more humbly: "The best corrective to a hazardous marriage which cannot be prevented is to protract matters and consult one's lawyer with due deliberation." His own lawyer, M. Noiroi, in whom he had the utmost confidence, was from home, having been summoned to Italy on important business. He would await his return, and till then all should be left in suspense.

In the first conversation M. Moriaz had on this subject with his daughter, he found her most reasonable, ready to enter into his views and accede to his wishes. She was too grateful for his acquiescence not to reward him by a little consideration; and then she was too happy to feel impatient. Having gained her main point, it was not difficult to give way in details.

"People will say you have yielded to a whim," said her father. "You are not very sensitive to public opinion, I am more so; respect my weakness and cowardice. Let us consider appearances and not seem to be in haste or have

anything to conceal, but let us act with deliberation and discretion. There is no one in Paris now; let us give our friends time to return. We will introduce Count Larinski to them. Great happiness does not shrink from discussion; your choice will be debated by some, and approved by others. M. Larinski can and will please, and the world will excuse my resignation, which Madame de Lorey considers a crime."

"You promised me to combine cheerfulness with resignation, but you seem rather melancholy."

"You cannot require me to brim over with joy."

"Will you assure me that you have at least made a settled decision, and have no idea of retracting?"

"I promise you that."

"Well, we will respect your weakness," replied she, and consented to all he proposed.

It was agreed that the marriage should take place in the course of the winter, and that two months should elapse before proceeding to the first formalities. M. Moriaz undertook to reconcile Samuel Brohl to this arrangement, which the latter did not relish, though he took care not to betray this. He told M. Moriaz that he was still in the first intoxication of his bliss, and not sorry to have time to come to himself; but he vowed privately to find some artifices for shortening these delays and hastening the marriage. He was afraid of accidents, unforeseen circumstances, storms, squalls, hail and mildew, whatever can damage or destroy a crop; he longed to reap his and have it safely stored in his garner.

Meanwhile, as his supplies began to run short, he wrote a majestic but confidential letter to his old friend, Herr Guldenthal, which had the greatest effect. Herr Guldenthal looked on a good match as a far better security than a bad gun. Besides, he had been agreeably surprised by the punctual repayment of his loan, both capital and interest.

He was delighted to see such an excellent client return, and hastened to advance at twenty per cent all the money he wanted, and even more.

A month rolled peacefully by, during which Samuel Brohl came to Cormeilles twice or thrice a week. There he secured the good graces of the whole establishment, down to the gardener, the lodge-keeper and the Angora cat who had received him on his first visit. This pretty white silky-haired puss had conceived a deplorable sympathy for Samuel Brohl; perhaps she had recognised in him a feline disposition. She made the most flattering advances to him, and liked to rub herself against him, to jump on his knees and lie in his lap. On the other hand, Mademoiselle Moriaz's great tan spaniel disliked the new-comer and looked askance at him; when Samuel tried to caress him, he gave a low growl and showed his teeth, which procured him some sharp correction from his mistress. Dogs are born policemen; they have a wonderful power of divination and an instinctive hatred of any people not thoroughly respectable, whose passports are not correct or who borrow the passports of others. As to Mademoiselle Moiseney, who had not the keen scent of a spaniel, she was in raptures with this noble, heroic, and incomparable Count Larinski. In a tête-à-tête he had had with her, he had shown so much respect for her character, such admiration for her natural and acquired gifts, that she had been moved to tears; for the first time she felt herself understood. She had been still more moved by his requesting her, as a favour, never to leave Mademoiselle Moriaz, and to consider the house which would one day be his as her own. "What a man!" cried she, with the same conviction as Mademoiselle Galet.

Samuel Brohl's chief study was to ingratiate himself with M. Moriaz, whose second thoughts he feared. He was in some measure successful, disarming at least his ill will by

the irreproachable correctness of his manners, the reserve of his language, and his absolute want of curiosity about everything immediately or remotely connected with his own personal interests. What could have made Madame de Lorey suspect Samuel Brohl of being an appraiser and casting his eyes round like one? If he had forgotten himself at Maisons, he never forgot himself at Cormeilles. What were the things of the world to him? He was floating above it, heaven had thrown wide her gates; the happy are too much absorbed in their ecstasy to look into details and draw up an inventory of their paradise.

But Samuel's ecstasy did not prevent him from making himself agreeable or useful on all occasions to M. Moriaz. He often asked leave to accompany him to his laboratory. M. Moriaz flattered himself that he had discovered a new element, to which he attributed some very curious properties. Since his return, he had been engaged in delicate experiments which were not always successful: his movements were awkward, and he had not full use of his stiffening fingers; sometimes he broke everything he touched. Samuel offered to assist him in a manipulation requiring a good deal of skill; he had the long, supple, slender fingers of a conjuror, and the operation proved successful beyond expectation.

M. Moriaz showed some self-knowledge when he owned to being sensitive to the opinions of others; it was his peculiar weakness, and we can scarcely blame him for it. It is not easy for a philosopher to regulate his conduct with reference to public opinion; it is a power dangerous to despise, but equally dangerous in its tyrannical rule. Public opinion is often mistaken, but there is almost always a grain of sense in its absurdities, and a foundation of justice in its injustice. The philosopher ought to be able to shut himself up in his cell and defend the proud solitude of his conscience from the

world; but unfortunately prolonged solitude sometimes warps the mind, and the solitary system has turned men mad; for great as man may be, the individual man is insignificant!

M. Moriaz was the more sensitive to public opinion, because in his eyes it took tangible form; to him it was embodied under the features of a woman of fifty, having some remains of beauty, a dry-toned voice and black eyebrows ready to frown; the eyebrows were Madame de Lorey's. He had acquired a habit of doing nothing without asking himself: "What will Madame de Lorey, this great authority on the proprieties, think?" He did not deny that the authority had prejudices; but in everything unconnected with chemistry, he respected her decisions and dreaded her censure; when those black eyebrows frowned, his conscience was uneasy.

Men who work hard like to feel their mind at ease, and if they have a thorn in their foot, long to pull it out or forget all about it. M. Moriaz tried to persuade himself that, all things considered, Count Larinski was a very suitable and presentable son-in-law, that he might feel easy as to his daughter's future, and occupy himself quietly in letting a little more light into his laboratory.

Although Mademoiselle Moiseney's raving enthusiasm jarred on his nerves, he was inclined to think there was some good in Poland, and submitted quietly to his thorn in the flesh; but so long as Madame de Lorey sulked, he could not feel quite reassured, and Madame de Lorey persisted in sulking. He had written to her again, and called twice without finding her in; she had neither replied nor returned his calls.

Women do not like to own themselves defeated. Madame de Lorey was furious at having been taken in by Count Larinski, and retracting all the concessions she had made,

decided in her animosity that a swooning man could be nothing but an adventurer. She had disputes on the subject with M. Langis, who maintained that M. Larinski was a great hypocrite, but might possibly be a real count; he had met some on his travels who cheated at cards and pocketed insults. Their parts were reversed, and Madame de Lorey in her turn called him a simpleton.

She had written to Vienna in hopes of obtaining fresh information, but could learn nothing that would satisfy her. She did not lose courage; she knew that M. Moriaz would find it hard to dispense with her approbation, and made up her mind to bide her time for making a decisive attack. Meanwhile she amused herself with fidgetting him by her silence and annoying him by her prolonged sulks.

To put an end to them M. Moriaz said one day to his daughter: "Madame de Lorey is obdurate, and it distresses me. I am afraid you may have let some word drop that has affronted her; I should be much obliged if you will go and see her and try to appease her."

"It is not a very agreeable mission," she observed; "but I can refuse you nothing, and will go to *Maisons* to-morrow."

At the moment when this conversation was taking place, Madame de Lorey, who was spending the day in Paris, had just entered the *École des Beaux-Arts*. Many people had been attracted thither by an exhibition of the works of a celebrated artist who had recently died. Madame de Lorey was flitting about, when she distinguished in the crowd a little woman of upwards of sixty-five, with a flat nose and small grey eyes sparkling with malice and impudence. Pretentiously, with her chin in the air and eye-glass in hand, she was examining all the pictures critically and contemptuously.

"Why, yes, it really is the Princess Gulof," said Madame de Lorey to herself, and turned away to escape recognition.

Three years before, during the bathing season at Ostend, she had made acquaintance with the princess, and did not care to renew it. The haughty capricious Russian, whom she had first met casually at a table d'hôte, a meeting that had ripened into an acquaintance, had left no very pleasing impression.

Princess Gulof was the wife of a governor-general, whom she had married as her second husband after a long widowhood. He did not see her often, only three or four times a year, but to make up for this, they kept up a most regular correspondence from one end of Europe to the other; the prince did nothing without taking his wife's advice, which was excellent. During the first years of their married life, he had committed the mistake of being really in love with her; for there is a kind of spicy, impish ugliness which can inspire the greatest passion. The princess considered this behaviour to be in the very worst taste, and had no rest or comfort till she supplied Dimitri Paulovitch with a mistress and brought him to reason.

From that day forward, perfect harmony had reigned between the husband and wife, separated by the length of Europe and united by the post. She had long had strong passions and never bridled them. Morality she looked upon as a pure convention, like the rules of whist or baccarat, nor did she disguise her opinions, having a habit of saying whatever she thought. Her passions were indeed but violent caprices, stormy curiosity which she longed to gratify.

She made voyages of discovery and increased her experience; she had met with many deceptions, and come to the conclusion that man is not worth much. She passed rapidly, nay, suddenly, from one experience to another; she did not wait to finish the book before throwing it away, the first chapter was often enough for her; and as to prefaces, she never read them. Yet a more lasting caprice,

which had become a cherished habit, had seized her late in life; for nearly five years she flattered herself that she had found what she sought. Alas, for the first time, she had been herself deserted in turn before her fancy was exhausted. This desertion had wounded her pride deeply, she had conceived an implacable hatred for the faithless one and then ended by forgetting him. On turning her sixtieth year, she had suddenly calmed down, and ceased to enjoy any but mental pleasures. She had plunged into natural science and made dissections, one way perhaps of avenging herself. Her ideas were very advanced; she professed the most radical evolutionist views, and considered it proved that man is descended from the ape, the ape from the monad and the *Bathybius Haeckelii*. She had a profound contempt for all who ventured to doubt this, and despised all the world for that matter. She did not give way to melancholy; dissecting and despising everything affords one a species of happiness.

During their mutual stay at Ostend, Madame de Lorey had gained the Princess Gulof's good graces by nursing with wonderful skill her lap-dog, Moufflard, whose paw had been broken by some clumsy person. The princess doted on Moufflard, though she was now and then tempted to open him in order to learn what was inside. She felt grateful to Madame de Lorey for her sympathy and care, and showed her every attention. Madame de Lorey had responded duly to her advances, but did not care much for the society of this old woman, who never ceased chattering and enjoyed relating the secret history of all the European capitals; Madame de Lorey was soon tired of her cosmopolitan gossip and physiology, and thought her both cynical and wicked.

When she met her in the *École des Beaux-Arts*, her first impulse was to avoid her, but she suddenly changed her mind. For some weeks she had been possessed by a fixed

idea, on which she brought everything to bear; a sudden inspiration came to her, and seemed sent direct from heaven. "The Princess Gulof," said she to herself, "has spent her life in travelling about the world; her real home is a well-padded railway carriage; there is not a city where she has not lived, or a soul that she does not know, she has been everywhere; might she not happen to know Count Larinski?"

Madame de Lorey retraced her steps, threaded the crowd, made her way up to the princess, and plucking her by the sleeve, said: "So you are here, princess! How is Moufflard?"

The princess gave her a side glance, and taking her hand between her finger and thumb, with no more ceremony than if they had parted the day before, said: "Moufflard is very bad, my dear. He died of indigestion two months ago."

"And have you been mourning over him?"

"I am still inconsolable."

"Well, princess, I will undertake to console you. I have a lap-dog not six months old; you could not find a more charming one, or one with a shorter muzzle or whiter and softer hair. I am very practical, as you know, and only care for large dogs that are of some use. Will you accept Moufflard the Second? but you will have to come and fetch him, and so give me the pleasure of seeing you at Maisons."

The princess replied that she was on her way to England, and only passing through Paris, that she had but a few hours, and then within two minutes promised Madame de Lorey to come and see her the following afternoon.

Next day, Madame de Lorey saw the Princess Gulof enter her drawing-room. The first topic of conversation was the lap-dog, who was pronounced charming and worthy to succeed Moufflard the First. Madame de Lorey chatted for

some time while waiting her opportunity, and then exclaimed: "By the way, princess, you know everything and are such a cosmopolitan, have you ever heard of a mysterious personage called Count Abel Larinski?"

"Not that I know of, my dear, though the name does not seem quite unfamiliar."

"Search your memory, you must have come across him somewhere, you who have been all over the——"

"Habitable world," she broke in; "but that does not include Siberia, from my point of view, and your Larinski was sent there, if I am not mistaken."

"Would that he had been! Perhaps there might have been some idea of treating the father, of whom you are speaking, to this little trip; but unluckily he took the precaution of emigrating to America. The worst of America is that people can return from it; and the son, my Larinski, has come back, to my sorrow."

"How has he injured you?" asked the princess, pulling the ears of the lap-dog, who was asleep on her knee.

"I used to talk to you at Ostend about my god-daughter, Mademoiselle Moriaz, a charming creature. I thought of marrying her to my nephew, M. Langis, an accomplished young man. This Count Abel Larinski very inconveniently turned up and cast a glamour over the child, and he is going to marry her."

"How distressing! Is he handsome?"

"That is really his only merit."

"It is quite sufficient," replied the princess, and her grey eye sparkled. "The one thing clear about a man is his looks, the rest is a matter of discussion."

"Allow me to consider things from a more plebeian point of view," returned Madame de Lorey. "If I must tell you what I think, I suspect Count Larinski of being neither a real Larinski, nor a real count; I would lay

my life that all the Larinskis are dead, and that this man is some sharper."

"I shall begin to be interested in the case," replied the princess. "Don't abuse sharpeners; I have known some, and they are one of the most curious varieties of the human race. Let your godchild marry hers, it will give a little piquancy to her life; this is such a monotonous world."

"Many thanks; but my god-child was not born to marry a sharper. I detest this Larinski, and have sworn to play him some trick."

"Don't excite yourself, my dear. What colour are his eyes?"

"As green as a cat's or an owl's."

Princess Gulof's eyes sparkled again, and she exclaimed: "An adventurer with green eyes! It is a splendid match, and you must be hard to please."

"I am vexed with you, princess," returned Madame de Lorey. "I had counted on your assisting me with your intelligence, your incomparable penetration and practised eye, to unmask this Pole, and discover some fatal vice in him. Now do be kind for once, and allow me to introduce him to you."

"As I told you, I am only passing through Paris," replied the princess, "and I am expected in England. Besides, you pay too great a compliment to my incomparable penetration. I declare that I know nothing about Larinskis, so do not think of introducing yours. I am a good-natured woman, and have often been taken in, but I don't complain. The best features in my past life are a certain number of agreeable delusions, and men who understood the art of lying. I have made up my mind to base my opinion on the outside labels, and ask no one to show me the bottom of his sack, I have discovered long since that sacks have no bottoms. Let your god-daughter have her own way; if she is mistaken, it is because she chooses to be so, and knows better than you

what will suit her. And after all, what can it signify if there is one unhappy marriage the more in the world! Besides, it is only fools who are miserable and stand stupidly before a closed gate, others pass by and make a hole through the hedge. Marriage, my dear, is a threadbare institution. Ten years hence, it will have ceased to exist, all women will be free, and take their husbands on trial. Ten years hence, Countess Larinski will be an emancipated woman. Let her serve her time of bondage, she will enjoy her liberty all the more."

As the Princess Gulof ended this declaration of her principles, the door opened, and Mademoiselle Moriaz entered. The future Countess Larinski kept her promise to her father, whatever it cost her. Madame de Lorey took care to receive her kindly; she went to meet her, stretched out both hands, and kissed her on both cheeks, reproaching her affectionately for coming so seldom; then she introduced her to the princess, who said: "Come here, my pretty one, and let me look at you; I am told you are charming."

When Antoinette came up to her, the princess scrutinised her closely with her gimblet eyes, examining her from head to foot, and running over all her points, as if she had been a Norman farmer making a purchase at a cattle-fair. The result of the examination was favourable; the princess exclaimed: "She is really very pretty!" and went on to say how like Mademoiselle Moriaz was to a certain person who had played a certain part in a certain adventure, which she undertook to relate.

She had scarcely ended this story when she began another. Madame de Lorey was on thorns, knowing by experience that Princess Gulof's stories were generally of a doubtful character, little fitted for maiden ears. She looked anxiously at Antoinette, and when she felt that some particularly objectionable passage was coming, was seized with a

violent fit of coughing. The princess, understanding her meaning, endeavoured to veil all improprieties, but the veil was generally very transparent. Then Madame de Lorey began to cough again, till the princess lost all patience, and broke off abruptly with the words: "Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera,—and so the story ends."

Mademoiselle Moriaz listened and looked in astonishment, not understanding the meaning of these fits of coughing and interruptions, and never guessing at what was hid beneath: "Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera." She thought the Princess Gulof very odd, and even suspected that her brain was slightly touched; but she was grateful to her for being there to save her from a tête-à-tête with Madame de Lorey, and thus sparing her disagreeable explanations and an unpleasant discussion.

For nearly an hour she sat motionless in her chair, watching with a sort of stupor the turning of the sails of this wordy wind-mill which never cared to rest, and moved its clapper noisily. After talking ill of her neighbours, including emperors and grand-dukes, and multiplying her *et ceteras*, the Princess Gulof suddenly turned to physiology; this science, of which she had made herself mistress, seemed to her the clue to everything, the alpha and omega of human life. These materialist doctrines she proceeded to expound with a frankness of phrase that startled Mademoiselle Moriaz's delicate ears. From being astonished, she became rather scandalised, and thinking that her visit had been long enough, beat a retreat, without any effort on Madame de Lorey's part to detain her.

On reaching Corneilles, her carriage met a young man on horseback, riding with his head bent down, and allowing his steed to choose his own pace. The young man started, when a soprano voice, which he thought the sweetest music in the world, cried: "Where are you going, Camille?"

He bent over his horse's neck, took off his hat, and answered: "To Maisons."

"Don't go there, there is some horrid talk going on." And Mademoiselle Moriaz added in an authoritative voice: "You cannot pass, you are my prisoner."

She obliged him to turn back; and ten minutes after, she had left the carriage, and he had alighted from his horse, and they were sitting side by side on a garden bench.

A few days before, M. Langis had met M. Moriaz, who had complained bitterly of his having also deserted him and extorted a promise that he would come to see him. This promise he had just fulfilled. Had he chosen his time well? He had been both glad and sorry to find that Mademoiselle Moriaz was not there. Man, especially a man in love, is a mass of contradictions. For the same reason he blessed and cursed the fate which had just thrown him into Antoinette's way. For some moments, he felt taken aback, but soon regained his composure, having formed the generous resolution of seeming natural, and playing his part of friend and brother to the end. He had carried it out so well at St. Moritz that Antoinette thought him cured of the passing fancy which he had had for her, and which she had never regarded in a serious light.

"Last time I saw you," said she, "you let a word slip which greatly pained me, but I wish to believe that you did not intend it."

"I am very guilty," replied he, "and I acknowledge my fault. I was disrespectful to your idol."

"Fortunately my idol was not aware of it, and had he been, I should have appeased him by saying: 'Excuse this young man, he does not always know what he is saying.'"

"That is often the case, but I have always thought it a very queer thing for a man to faint. We must be on our guard against prejudices: every country has its own ways,

and since you like Poland, I will endeavour to see its good side."

"That is the way to speak. I mean to reconcile you to Count Larinski this very day; stay and dine with us, he will be here directly; the first duty of all whom I like, is to like one another."

M. Langis began by refusing the invitation most decidedly, but Antoinette insisted, and he ended by bowing his acquiescence. Youth has a zest for suffering.

As, with his hat on one side, he traced some figures on the sand with a switch he had picked up, he resumed, in an easy tone: "I wish M. Larinski no ill, but you will allow that I should be justified in hating him cordially, for it is only two years, if I am not mistaken, since I had the honour of asking for your hand. Do you remember?"

"Perfectly," replied she, fixing her clear eyes upon him; "but I must confess that this fancy of yours never seemed to me either very reasonable, or much in earnest."

"You are mistaken; I can assure you that your refusal plunged me into despair for forty-eight hours, the real sort of despair which prevents a man from eating, drinking, or sleeping, and suggests nothing but suicide."

"And at the end of forty-eight hours you had recovered?"

"Well, that is the natural ending, and philosophers make it the beginning. I hesitated a long time before I asked for your hand, saying to myself: 'If she refuses me, I shall not be able to see her again.' Now that I see you again, it is all right."

"And when are you going to marry?"

"I? Never. I shall die a bachelor. A man who has failed to marry Mademoiselle Moriaz can never marry. He affects the inconsolable."

"And from the moment when it ceases to prevent his eating, drinking, and sleeping—"

"He becomes interesting, without suffering from the consequences," he returned, gaily. Then, glancing around, he said: "It seems to me as if you had altered this terrace, put what was on the right on the left, done away with plantations and cut down trees; I don't remember all this."

"You are quite mistaken; nothing has been altered, your memory is at fault. What, don't you recognise this terrace, the scene of so many exploits? I was a perfect tyrant and made you do whatever I liked. You rebelled now and then, but on the whole the slave worshipped his chains. Where are your eyes? Why, look, there is the sycamore which you once climbed to get out of my way, because I wanted to dress you up as a girl, you said, and such a transformation was not to your mind. This is the avenue in which we used to play at ball, and here is the hornbeam hedge and the clumps of shrubs in which we used to play hide and seek."

"So we did," he replied. "When I was away in Hungary, I made it into a song and even set it to music."

"Sing it to me."

"You would laugh at me, I have no voice; but I will recite it to you. The verses are poor, I am no Academician. Oh, but when I address you so familiarly in this song, will it vex you?"

"I have determined that nothing shall vex me."

"Listen to my poor lines," said he, "and tell me whether they are not full of sentiment."

And lowering his voice, without daring to look up, he repeated the two following stanzas:

"Once in the woods and meadows green
In happy days gone by,
We played our games of hide and seek
On lawns 'neath hazels high.
Those days are past, my Antoinette,
But still I ask, can you forget?"

Once in the woods and meadows green
As happily we played,
The place where you would choose to hide
Your secret ne'er betrayed.
So well you hid yourself away,
I've never found you to this day."

"It is a pretty song," said she; "but untrue, for here we are both on one seat."

She was so innocent of the pain she gave and the torture she was inflicting, that he could neither accuse her nor complain, but he asked himself whether the best woman's heart is free from a germ of cruelty and unconscious ferocity. The tears started to his eyes and were ready to flow; he stooped down and examined a handsome stag-beetle that was running across the gravel path, on some important errand. When M. Langis raised his head, his eyes were dry, his face calm and smiling.

"Certainly," resumed he, "I must have seemed most absurd in your eyes two years ago. The idea of your play-fellow, little Camille, aspiring to become your husband. What a good joke it was!"

"Not at all," answered she; "but I felt at once that it was a mistake. Little Camilles have quick and lively imaginations, and are easily mistaken in their feelings. Friendship and love are so different! I told Mademoiselle Moiseney once that a woman ought never to marry an intimate friend, or she loses him, and it is well to keep one's friends."

"Pooh! what will you do with yours now? I find my part a very modest and insignificant one. Raise the trap-door, and I will vanish."

"That is bad advice, I shall not raise the trap-door. We always stand in need of our friends. I can fancy cases in which the happiest of women might find herself embarrassed.

She may require information, advice or assistance without being able to apply to her husband, for husbands cannot do everything. If I am ever in such a plight, I shall apply to you, Camille."

"A bargain!" cried he; "I would come from the furthest parts of Transylvania, if necessary, to assist you."

And he held out his right hand, which she took and shook thrice.

At that moment, they heard the sound of a footstep, immediately recognised by Mademoiselle Moriaz, and Count Larinski appeared, coming from the path which led by the house. Antoinette went to meet him and led him forward by the end of his glove, which he had just removed and was holding in his hand.

"Gentlemen," said she, "I need not introduce you, for you know each other already."

Perhaps they knew rather too much of each other, which is worse than knowing nothing. Samuel Brohl, an expert in the art of concealing his feelings, endeavoured to smile, but the smile proved a grimace, so great was his vexation on finding the ground occupied by a man whose face he especially disliked. M. Langis, on his side, was forced to exercise almost superhuman power over his muscles to make Count Larinski a quasi-courteous inclination of the head, after which they sat down, one to look at the sky, the other to attempt to find his beetle, which had disappeared.

Mademoiselle Moriaz took a great deal of pains to break the ice, but it was all in vain, the conversation languished and was constantly dropping. "Decidedly there must be some coldness between them," thought she, "they do not assimilate, they are too unlike." She observed the two men alternately; the one with a slender, supple figure and fine moustache, a fair haired man who did not look his age and whose fresh young face gave no clue to his energetic will

and strength both of mind and muscle ; the other broad-shouldered, with a massive head and deep, feverish, harassed, romantic eyes, betraying a life of struggles and suffering. "This is my romance, of which I only know the first page," thought Antoinette ; "the other is a chapter of my youth, which I shall always enjoy reading again. But why do they keep looking at each other like two china dogs ? Willingly, or unwillingly, they must end by agreeing and liking each other."

It is difficult to make two men who dislike each other converse, it is easier to separate them, as M. Moriaz did. When he made his appearance at the end of the terrace, M. Langis rose to join him, and Antoinette was left alone with Samuel Brohl, who said brusquely : "Does M. Langis mean to stay here for ever ?"

"Why," answered she, "he has only just come !"

"And will you send him away soon ?"

"I had so little intention of sending him away that I asked him to stay dinner, on purpose that you might learn to know him better."

"I am much obliged by your kind intentions ; but I don't like M. Langis."

"What fault can you find with him ?"

"I have met him now and then at Madame de Lorey's, and he has always treated me with dubious politeness. I suspect him of being my enemy."

"A mere fancy ! M. Langis is the friend of my childhood, and I have told him that it is his duty to like those whom I like."

"I mistrust the friends of your childhood," returned he, growing warm. "I should not be surprised if this stripling were in love with you."

"Ah, you ought to have heard what he said just now. This stripling was reminding me how he asked for my hand

two years ago, and declaring that forty-eight hours had sufficed to console him for my refusal."

"I did not know that the case was so serious, or the individual so dangerous. Shall you really keep M. Langis to dinner?"

"I have invited him; can I draw back?"

"Very well, I will vacate the field," he exclaimed, rising.

She looked at him and was struck dumb with astonishment at the change in his countenance. His contracted eyebrows formed an acute angle, and he looked hard, harsh, and evil. This was a Larinski she had never yet seen, or rather Samuel Brohl, who had just shown himself, having appeared as suddenly on the scene as a Jack in the box. She could not take her eyes off him, and he perceived the effect he had produced. Samuel Brohl popped back at once into his box, the lid closed, and it was a true Pole who said to Mademoiselle Moriaz in a grave, melancholy, respectful tone: "Forgive me, I cannot always control my feelings."

"Well," said she, "you will stay, won't you?"

"Impossible," replied he; "I should make myself disagreeable, and annoy you."

She pressed him, and he met her entreaties with a polite but firm resistance. She was much distressed. For the last month her heart had been expanding in the sunshine of joy; a flowering almond is not happy when it feels itself suddenly cut by the sharp north-easter which strips it of its blossoms; it shivers and begins to feel suspicious of the spring.

Mademoiselle Moriaz accompanied Samuel Brohl to the gate.

"Good-bye," said she. "When shall I see you again?"

"To-morrow, the day after to-morrow, I don't know when."

"Don't you really know?"

He saw that her eyes were filled with tears, and kissing her hand tenderly, said, with a smile which consoled her:

"This is the first time we have had a dispute; I may, perhaps, be in the wrong, but if I were a woman, I don't think I should care to marry a man who was always in the right."

After these words, he assured himself again that her eyes were wet, and then took his departure, charmed to have ascertained the extent of his influence over her.

When she rejoined M. Langis, he asked whether he had been so unlucky as to drive away Count Larinski, adding that he should be extremely sorry if such were the case.

"Don't distress yourself," was her answer, "he came on purpose to let me know that he had an engagement this evening."

The dinner was not over lively. Mademoiselle Moiseney nursed a grudge against M. Langis, she could not forgive him for having made fun of her more than once, which, in her eyes, was sheer blasphemy. M. Moriaz was delighted to have his dear Camille with him again, but he was asking himself mournfully why this young man was not to be his son-in-law. Antoinette had occasional fits of absence, though she showed Camille much kindness. Love had gained the mastery over her generous soul, and it could persuade her to be imprudent; but had no power to make her unjust.

At nine o'clock, M. Langis vaulted into his saddle and was off. As he rode along, he felt more than once as if his heart would break, then he dug his spurs into his horse's flanks, and it flew through the air and left space behind. It might have been thought that he had laid a wager to outstrip his sorrow, or perhaps he hoped that the wind, through which he flew, might bear away his thoughts with the shadows of night.

Meanwhile, Mademoiselle Moriaz, leaning on the window-sill, was meditating on Count Larinski's outburst as she gazed upon the stars; the sky was unclouded, save for one tiny

black fleck above Mont-Valérien. Mademoiselle Moriaz felt heavy at heart, but she had an implicit confidence that all would come right on the morrow. What is one black spot on the expanse of a starlit sky !

CHAPTER X.

THERE once lived a handsome Athenian, called Hippoclides, a true representative of his race and country ; possibly Aristophanes was thinking of him when he invented his republic of birds. Hippoclides was a bird turned man ; his hand, his foot, his heart and his brain were all light. His soul lay in his heels, he spent his life in dancing, or rather, danced it away. He became enamoured of the daughter of Clisthenes, tyrant of Sicyon, who was a grave man. He became grave himself, put on a severe countenance, and for a whole year forbore to laugh or sin against the proprieties, so that he might have passed for the most Spartan of Spartans. Such meritorious exertions were about to be rewarded, when unfortunately a great feast was given one night, and Hippoclides took rather more wine than was good for him. He leaped suddenly on the table, and, to the astonishment of Clisthenes and the other spectators, began to dance first on his feet, then on his hands and head. Whereupon Clisthenes said : " Hippoclides, you can never be my son-in-law, your dance has put an end to your marriage." To which the handsome Athenian replied : " What cares Hippoclides ? " and went on dancing. Thus it is ; springs, long bent, fly back, and sooner or later nature asserts herself.

Things did not fall out at Cormeilles as they did at Sicyon; fathers are no longer tyrants to break off marriages; it is the princesses who do as they please. Nor was there much resemblance between Samuel Brohl and Hippoclides: the one was a sparrow, the other belonged to the rapacious and voracious class of birds of prey, he did not care to dance, and possessed the gravity befitting all animals who live by the chase. The only point in common between him and Hippoclides was, that when once certain of being loved and wedded, he would cease to lay any restraint on his natural disposition; the fierceness of his appetite and will had been suddenly revealed, and Mademoiselle Moriaz had caught sight of his hooked beak.

Yet in all that Samuel Brohl did, even down to his outbursts, there was some little calculation and system. He had undoubtedly been much vexed to find M. Camille Langis at Cormeilles; he had possibly private and most personal reasons for disliking him. Still, in case of need, he could command his temper, feelings, and animosities, and when he became peevish, it was because it suited his purpose.

He was eager to enter into possession, to feel his bliss secured against all risks; delays and precautions displeased and irritated him. He suspected M. Moriaz of wishing to gain time and draw up a formal contract with the aid of his lawyer to bind Count Larinski's hands. He was bent on seizing the first opportunity of showing himself suspicious and sensitive, in the hope that Mademoiselle Moriaz might take alarm and say to her father: "I intend to be married in three weeks without waiting for the settlement." The opportunity had come, and Samuel Brohl had taken care not to miss it.

The next day he received the following note:

"You have distressed me very, very much. So soon!— I spent a miserable evening and hardly slept all night. I

have thought over our discussion or dispute and tried to persuade myself that I was in the wrong; I have not succeeded in this, any more than in understanding you. Oh how your suspicious surprise me! It is so easy to have faith when we love. Write me word at once that you have been thinking it over too and have seen your fault. I don't require you to do penance and sit in sackcloth and ashes, but I condemn you to love me more to-day than you did yesterday, and more to-morrow than to-day. On this condition, I will pass over your fit of ill-temper and never mention it again. Shall this be a bargain? Ever yours."

Samuel Brohl was surprised by receiving another note at the same moment, to this effect:

"My dear Count,—I cannot account for your proceedings; you might be dead for all I know. I fancied I had some claim on your attention, and that you would have come at once to announce the great event yourself and ask for my congratulations. Pray come and dine at Maisons to-night to meet the Abbe Miollens, who is longing to embrace you; you know that he studies men in Horace, and prefers you to them all.

"Don't send any answer, but come, or I shall have a lasting quarrel with you."

Samuel Brohl replied as follows to Mademoiselle Moriaz:

"You may be sure that I have suffered more than yourself. Forgive me; those who have gone through a great deal often require forgiveness. My imagination often takes alarm. You say that those who love have faith. Great and unexpected joys make my heart suspicious; I have been boding ill for some time past. After attempting to fly from my happiness, I tremble lest it should escape me; it seems too good to be anything but a dream. To be loved by you!

—I feel afraid ; each night I ask myself, will she love me to-morrow ? Perhaps a secret remorse is mingled with my anxiety. I have often been tortured by my sensitive pride ; you blame me for it, and I shall try to cure myself, but it is not to be cured in a day. During these long months of suspense, I shall be plagued by more than one suspicion, more than one evil thought. I promise to be silent and keep them to myself.

“The punishment you inflict on me is to love you more to-day than I did yesterday ; you must know that is impossible. I will punish myself in a different way. Madame de Lorey has asked me to dinner. I suspect her of not being over well-disposed towards me, and think her rather unsympathetic and unable to understand those follies of the heart which are true wisdom. I will accept her invitation and spend this evening at Maisons instead of Cormeilles. Are you satisfied ? Am I not ready to do penance ?

“But to-morrow—I shall come at two o'clock, and make my way in through the little green gate which opens into the orchard. Will you do something to please me ? Be walking up and down the path in which I delight about two o'clock. The wall is rather low just there, and I shall be able to see above it in the distance as I come, your white silk parasol. You see I calculate upon having sunshine. Am I not a baby ? It is not surprising ; I was born three months and a half ago ; my life commenced on the 5th of July in this present year, at 4 p.m. in the Cathedral at Chur. Forgive me all, my faults, my fears, and my childishness.

“Farewell till to-morrow, my darling.”

The footman who had brought Mademoiselle Moriaz's letter to Rue 'Mont-Thabor took back the answer we have just read, and this answer relieved her while it made her thoughtful. She brooded over certain passages which struck

her attention especially. Though Samuel Brohl had not underlined them, he had not miscalculated their effect. Mademoiselle Moriaz decided that it would be advisable to shorten the time of suspense and expedite matters, and that she would beg Count Larinski when they next met to fix the date of the wedding himself. As to the contract, she had an opportunity of speaking to her father at once on the subject, for he announced that he had invited M. Noiroi, his lawyer, to dinner on the following day.

She kept silence for some moments, and then said: "Can you explain to me what is the use of lawyers?"

He replied, unconsciously, almost in the words of the philosopher: "*We* look only at the present, lawyers look to the future and possible contingencies."

She rejoined that she did not believe in contingencies and disliked precautions, because precautions presupposed mistrust and might seem offensive.

"To-day is very fine," was his reply, "but it may chance to rain to-morrow. If I were to start on a journey to-night I should take my umbrella with me without thinking that this would be insulting Providence. Who talks of offending M. Larinski? Far from disapproving what I do, he will be grateful. Why did he refuse to marry you? Because you were rich and he was poor. The settlements I propose to have drawn up will soothe his disinterestedness and his pride."

She answered quickly: "He is above all money matters, and I do not wish them to be laid before him. Since you are so fond of similes, let us suppose that you are inviting one of your friends to take a turn round your kitchen garden. Your espaliers are laden with fruit, but you know that your friend is an honest man and does not care for pears either. Yet you persist in handcuffing him. Would he or would he not consider himself insulted?"

He replied angrily that the cases were perfectly different, and when Mademoiselle Moiseney took upon herself to interfere in the discussion in support of Antoinette, declaring that such a man as Count Larinski was not to be mistrusted, and that men of science are incapable of sympathizing with delicate feelings, he gave her a good snubbing and told her to mind her own business. For the first time in his life, he was really angry.

Antoinette soothed him with caresses and promised to receive M. Noirot kindly, to attend seriously to his advice and to endeavour to profit by it, reserving the right of pointing out to him how deficient lawyers were in common sense.

While M. Moriaz was engaged in this stormy discussion with his daughter, Samuel Brohl was on his way to Maisons. Madame de Lorey's note and invitation had first surprised and then pleased him; he saw in it a proof that she was ceasing to struggle against the inevitable or to oppose destiny and Samuel Brohl, and had made up her mind to put a good face on her defeat. He had formed the generous design of consoling her for her mortification, and winning her good will by his modest and pleasing manner. "I have thwarted her," said he with a smile, "but I bear her no malice."

Samuel Brohl, seated alone in the railway carriage, was happy, perfectly happy. He was nearly in port, and considered it a settled thing that within a fortnight the banns would be published. Was he alone in his compartment? An adored image was by his side; he spoke to her and she replied. With a rare frigidity of soul, Samuel Brohl combined an excitable imagination, and when his imagination was kindled, he had a feeling of warmth about him, which he took for a heart. He was really persuading himself that he possessed one. At this moment, he saw Antoinette as he had left her the night before, with a brilliant complexion, flushed cheeks, and

reproachful eyes, wet and almost swimming with tears. She had never looked so charming in his eyes. He believed himself so madly in love that he was tempted to make fun of himself. He was enjoying, in anticipation, the joys in store for him, and looking forward to the day and hour when this elegant creature would be his, when he could dispose of her as his property, and devour page after page and chapter upon chapter of this handsome volume, so luxuriously printed and richly bound.

Yet he was not the man to let such a reverie absorb him altogether. His thoughts travelled on; he pictured to himself his whole future, fashioning it to his own fancy. He took leave of his doleful past, as a blind man who has miraculously regained his sight parts with his dog and alms-tray, annoying reminders of his unfortunate days. He had done now with paltry occupations, uncongenial work, humiliating servitude, anxiety for the morrow, the necessity of reckoning his pence, scanty meals, expedients, misery and usurers; he said farewell to them all. Henceforth he would have money by handfuls, and his share of plenty, feasts, the delights of idleness, the pleasures of command, all the sweets and peace of a pleasant little egotism lying on cotton wool and eider down, fed on ortolans, and owning two or three houses, a carriage, horses and a box at the opera. What a prospect! Samuel Brohl passed his tongue at intervals over his lips, they were parched.

Alnaschar the Idle's property amounted, as we know, to eight hundred silver drachmas, and he hoped to marry the Grand Vizier's daughter one day. He felt tired of waiting till the marriage was fixed, before he could dress like a prince, and mount a horse with a saddle of fine gold. He intended to bring his wife up in good habits, to train her to obedience, to teach her to stand in his presence and be always ready to wait on him, and he had resolved that on her first caprice or

revolt, he would correct her with his eye, his hand, and even his foot.

If Samuel Brohl's mind was more sedate than that of Hippoclides the Athenian, he was less brutal than Alnaschar of Bagdad, but was he much less savage? He, too, had resolved to educate his wife, he meant the Grand Vizier's daughter to devote herself exclusively to his happiness and service. His dream of conjugal bliss was to own a beautiful brown-eyed slave with chestnut hair, shot with gold, who would make Samuel Brohl her pasha and her god, and spend her life at his feet, forestalling his wishes, reading his pleasure on his face, attentive to his frowns and fancies, his in body and soul, raising to him the eyes of a timid gazelle or faithful greyhound. And what need would there be for him to train Mademoiselle Antoinette Moriaz? Love would do that. She adored Samuel Brohl, he would direct her devotion and judgment; it was impossible for her to refuse him anything! She was already prepared for complete acquiescence and obedience, and would be his servant and slave.

Rogues pride themselves on their facility for reading honest people; they never more than half understand them. The feelings of the upright are like certain languages, reputed easy, which are full of secrets and niceties inaccessible to vulgar minds. Some commercial travellers will learn Italian in three weeks and never know it; Samuel Brohl had made acquaintance with Mademoiselle Moriaz in a few days, but he failed to comprehend her.

He arrived at Maisons in the most smiling complacent frame of mind. While crossing Madame de Lorey's park, he reflected that both her children had died young, that she was free to leave her property as she liked, that she was rather short necked, and of apoplectic habit, and that Antoinette was her godchild; that, in truth, Madame de Lorey had a grudge against Count Larinski at present, but that the count

was clever and would soon manage to regain her good will. He thought the park magnificent; he admired its long straight avenues, which looked interminable, paused a few moments before the purple beech, and felt as if some connection existed between it and himself. He gazed with a proprietor's eyes on the terraces planted with fine limes, and determined to make his château at Maisons his main residence, his pretty villa at Cormeilles would do for an occasional one. As we see, his imagination had no bounds; it furnished him with gold, silver, and castles in the air.

We are unaware whether Madame de Lorey was really of apoplectic habit, but it is certain that she was not dead. Samuel Brohl saw her from afar, beneath the verandah, where she had stepped out to watch for his coming. He had forgotten that time was on the wing in the park that was one day to be his, and she began to be uneasy.

She called out: "Here you are at last! you always keep us waiting," adding in the most affable manner: "We meet again to day under less tragic auspices, and I hope you will carry away a pleasanter impression of Maisons."

He kissed her hand, saying, "Happiness must be purchased, and I could not pay too high a price for mine."

She brought him into the drawing-room, which he had scarcely entered when he saw a lady seated on an ottoman, fanning herself and talking to the Abbé Miollens. He stood motionless with his eyes fixed, scarcely breathing and as cold as marble; the walls of the room seemed to him to be swaying to and fro, and the floor rocking beneath his feet like the deck of a vessel pitching in a heavy sea.

On the day previous, when Antoinette had gone, Madame de Lorey had returned to the charge, and ended by persuading the Princess Gulof to put off her journey, dine with the green-eyed adventurer and cross-examine him. There she sat; yes, there could be no doubt who it was. Samuel

Brohl's first impulse was to make for the door and rush out, but he did not stir. He looked at Madame de Lorey; she was looking at him in astonishment and wondering what was the matter, not being able to account for the discomposure betrayed by his face. "It must be accidental," said he to himself; "she has not laid a trap for me, there is no conspiracy." This thought consoled him somewhat.

"Why, what is the matter?" asked she. "Is my unfortunate room making you ill again?"

He pointed to a flower-stand and said: "You are fond of hyacinths and tuberose; the scent overpowers me. You will think me very effeminate."

She replied in a caressing tone: "I think you a great man with terribly bad nerves; but you know by experience that if you faint, I have salts. Will you have my smelling-bottle?"

"You are most kind," he replied, as he walked bravely forward to face the danger. Dangers in silk dresses are the worst of all perils. As Samuel Brohl stepped forward, he spoke to himself, saying, like Turenne: "Tremble if you will, vile carcass! I shall make you face many another."

Madame de Lorey introduced him to the princess, who raised her chin to examine him with her little twinkling eyes. He felt as if the two grey orbs levelled at him were two balls piercing his heart; he shuddered from head to foot and asked himself if he were dead or alive. He soon perceived that he was alive; the princess remained impassive, not a muscle of her face moved. She ended her scrutiny by a half gracious smile and addressed a few insignificant words to Samuel, who only half caught them and thought them exquisite and delicious. He felt as if she were saying: "You are a fortunate man, born under a lucky star, my sight has been failing for some years, and I do not recognise you; thank your stars, you are safe." He was still listening after she had ceased to speak, drinking in her words and tones.

He felt so transported with joy that he nearly threw himself on the neck of the Abbé Miollens, who grasped his hand, exclaiming: "What have you to say now, my dear count? Great events have come to pass since last we met. What woman wills, God wills; after all, I had a hand in the matter and feel proud of it."

Madame de Lorey requested Count Larinski to offer the Princess Galof his arm and take her into the dining-room. He felt unable to articulate a word as he led her in, his emotion was still so great. Neither did she speak; the princess's right hand was employed in arranging one of her grey curls, which had fallen too much over her forehead. He looked at this short, plump hand, which had once, in a fit of jealous rage, dealt him two hard blows, and his cheeks recognised it.

The princess was lively during dinner; she paid more attention to the Abbé Miollens than to Count Larinski, and amused herself by teasing the good priest and scandalising him by her original suggestions and heretical opinions. He took care not to appear too scandalised, for to his natural good humour was united an innate respect for rank and princesses. She did not neglect so good an opportunity for propounding the theory of the man-ape. He was ready in repartee, and declared that he would rather feel himself a fallen angel than a perfected ape, that, in his eyes, a parvenu cut a worse figure in the world than the ruined descendant of a noble family. She replied that she was more of a democrat, that she set the highest value on those men and those apes who are the founders of their fortune. "I delight to chuck of myself," said she, "as a progressive monkey with a future before it, who, by taking pains, may hope to rise another step in the scale."

While they were talking in this fashion, Samuel Brohl was endeavouring to recover from the terrible blow he had re-

ceived. He was gladly confirmed in his opinion that the princess's sight had grown much feebler, that the microscopic studies to which she had always been addicted had made her rather short-sighted, so that she was obliged to look closely at her wine-glasses to find the one she wanted.

"She has not seen me for six years," thought he, "and I am become another man, I am transformed; sometimes I hardly know myself. I used to shave my beard, now I wear it long. My voice, my accent, the carriage of my head, my manner and expression are all changed; Poland has transfused her blood into me, I am no longer Samuel, but Larinski."

He blessed the microscope for injuring old women's sight, and Count Abel Larinski for making him his representative. Before the close of the meal, he had recovered all his equanimity and assurance. He joined in the conversation, told a sad story in a sad manner, uttered some sprightly witticisms with melancholy grace, gave vent to some highly chivalrous sentiments, and shook his lion's mane whilst speaking of the prisoner of the Vatican in tearful tones. It was impossible to be a more thorough Larinski.

The princess displayed curiosity and astonishment as she listened, and ended with saying: "Count, I admire you; but I believe in nothing but physiology, and you are rather too much of a Pole for me."

They had scarcely left the table and returned to the drawing-room before several visitors came in. This was a respite to Samuel. If the company was not sufficiently numerous to hide him, it served at least as a screen. He considered it certain that the princess had not recognised him, yet he felt ill at ease in her presence. This Calmuck face recalled the misery, shame, and hard bondage of his youth; he could not look at it without feeling his brow burn as if seared by a hot iron.

He struck up a conversation with a vain and pedantic

counsellor, whose interminable monologues were most wearisome. This gifted speaker seemed charming to Samuel; he thought him clever, sagacious, and entertaining; he had great merit in his eyes, that of not knowing Samuel. At this moment, Samuel divided the human race into two categories; the first comprising all good well-disposed who knew nothing of a certain Brohl, the second any old women who had made his acquaintance. He put deferential questions to the counsellor, hung upon his lips, smiled approvingly at all the silly speeches that fell from them, and longed for his conversation to continue for three hours; if this charming bore had shown any signs of setting him free, he would have held him by the button.

Suddenly he heard a sharp voice saying to Madame de Lorey: "Where is Count Larinski? Bring him here, I want to argue with him."

He submitted to his fate, parted reluctantly from his counsellor, and seated himself in a chair offered him by Madame de Lorey; he felt like a criminal, and saw distinctly all the instruments of torture, the boot, the rack, and even the wheel. Madame de Lorey left him with the Princess Gulof, who said: "I am told that I ought to offer you my congratulations and am anxious to do so - in spite of our being enemies."

"How are we enemies, princess?" asked he with a slight anxiety which vanished at her answer.

"I am a Russian and you a Pole; but we shall not have time to fight; I am leaving at seven o'clock in the morning for England."

He was ready to throw himself at her feet and kiss her hands tenderly in token of his gratitude. Spaniards call the reward bestowed on the messenger who brings you good news *albricias*. "Seven o'clock to-morrow!" was his mental ejaculation. "I was wrong, there is some good in her."

"When I call myself a Russian," said she, "it is a figure of speech. The idea of nationality is a prejudice, an obsolete idea, which had some life in the days of Epaminondas or Theseus, but is quite defunct now. We live in the age of telegraphs and steam-engines, and I know of no greater absurdity than a frontier, and no greater madman than a patriot. The story runs that you fought like a hero in the insurrection of 1863, displaying wonderful prowess, and killing ten Cossacks with your own hand. What harm had these poor Cossacks done you? Do not they sometimes haunt your dreams? Can you think of your victims without anxiety or remorse?"

He answered drily and haughtily: "I am not aware, princess, whether I have killed ten Cossacks with my own hand; but I know that there are subjects upon which I do not care to enlarge."

"You are right, I should not understand you. Don Quixote did not give Sancho the honour of an explanation every day."

"Pray let us talk of the man-ape," resumed he in a lighter tone. "That is a question which has the advantage of being neither Russian nor Polish."

"You will not succeed in diverting me from my subject. I intend to say what I think, at the risk of making you angry. You enunciated doctrines at table which exasperate me. You are not merely a Polish patriot but an idealist, true disciple of Plato, and you can't think how I have always hated that man. I have lived sixty-five years in this world and never come across anything but appetites and interest. Twice during dinner you spoke of the ideal world. What this ideal world, and where is it to be found? You talk about it as if it were a house where you knew the inmates and carried the key in your pocket. Can you show it to me? I swear not to rob you of it. Oh poet! For you are much a poet as a Pöle, and that is saying a great deal."

"After that, all I can do is to hang myself," said he, interrupting her with a smile.

"No, I should not think of hanging you. Thoughts are free, and we must let every one, even idealists, live. Besides, if we were to hang you, we should drive to despair a charming girl who dotes on you, for whom you were expressly made, and whom you are to marry very soon. When is the wedding to take place?"

"If I could venture to hope that you would do me the honour of being present, princess, I would await your return from England."

"You are too obliging, I would not delay Mademoiselle Moriaz's happiness on any account. Well, my dear count, I congratulate you sincerely. I had the pleasure of meeting the future Countess Larinski in this house. She is delightful, an exquisite creature, the very wife for a poet. She has mind and discernment, she has chosen you, which proves it. As to her fortune, I dare not ask you whether she has any; I should soon be silenced. Do idealists trouble themselves about such paltry matters?"

She drew nearer to him, and said, with a flutter of her fan: "These poor idealists! They have one misfortune."

"What is that, princess?"

"They dream with their eyes open, and the awakening is sometimes disagreeable. Ah, my dear Count Larinski, etc., etc., etc. And so the adventure ends."

Then stretching out her head, and darting on Samuel the long gaze of a viper, she murmured in a voice which pierced his brain like a sharp edged saw: "Samuel Brohl, green-eyed man, sooner or later mountains meet."

Opposite Samuel hung a large full length portrait of the late M. de Lorcy in his official robes. This ex-syndic of the Bourse seemed to him to have moved in his frame, and rolled his eyes horribly. The candelabra over the

mantelpiece also seemed to give out flames whose pink, green, and blue tongues flared up to the ceiling. He likewise felt as if his heart were beating as loud as the pendulum of a clock, and that every one would be turning round to make out where the noise came from. People were otherwise occupied, no one turned round, and no one suspected that a man in the room had just been struck by a thunder-bolt.

The man passed his hand over his forehead, on which stood a cold sweat ; then, dispelling by an effort of will the cloud which hung over his eyelids, he bent over the princess and said in a low voice, with a quivering brow and malicious air: "Princess, I know a little of the Samuel Brohl you mention; he is not a man to see himself strangled quietly. You are not often in the habit of writing, but he received two letters from you, of which he made a copy, depositing the originals in a safe place. If he ever found himself obliged to come into court, these two letters would add great interest to his counsel's defence, and be certain to delight all the gossiping journals of Paris."

With this he made her a low, respectful bow, took leave of Madame de Lorey and retired, followed by the Abbé Miollens, who tortured him by insisting on accompanying him to the station. Released from the restraint of Madame de Lorey's presence, the abbé gave full vent to his feelings respecting the happy event on which he prided himself as having taken part, and overwhelmed him with congratulations and wishes for his happiness, pouring out honey and myrrh for a quarter of an hour. Samuel would have liked to have wrung his neck. He did not breathe freely until relieved of the abbé's oppressive company.

A storm was growling in the almost cloudless sky ; it was a dry storm, the rain falling elsewhere. Flashes of lightning from all parts of the compass lit up the plain, accompanied

by distant peals of thunder. The hills seemed at times on fire. Samuel, sitting with his face pressed close to the window of the railway carriage, fancied he saw in the direction of Cormeilles a lurid glare, consuming his dream and two millions of francs in cash, to say nothing of expectations.

He reproached himself bitterly for having taken umbrage the night before. "If I had passed yesterday evening with her," thought he, "she would be sure to have mentioned the Princess Gulof; I should have taken my measures accordingly, and this would never have happened."

This was M. Langis' fault, he imputed his disaster to him, and hated him still more.

As he drew near Paris he felt his courage revive.

"The two letters frightened the old fairy," thought he; "she will think twice before making war on me. No, she will not dare." And he added: "Even if she dared, Antoinette is so fond of me that I can make her believe whatever I choose."

And he began to prepare the speech he would make in case of need.

At the same instant, Madame de Lorey, being left alone with the Princess Gulof, said: "Well, my dear, you drew my man out. What do you think of him?"

The princess's answer disappointed her greatly. "I think, my dear," said she, "that Count Larinski is the last of the romantic school, or the last of the troubadours, if you like; but I have no reason to suspect him of being an adventurer."

This was all that Madame de Lorey could manage to extract from the Princess Gulof; she had arranged to keep her there for the night and received nothing in return for her hospitality.

The princess spent part of the night in reflection and de-

liberation. Samuel Brohl's insolent threat had produced some effect. She tried to recall the precise tenor of the two letters which she had once been so imprudent as to write to him from London, during a business mission on which he was engaged for her in Paris. The one she had composed in a moment of foolish expansion, the other in a fit of passionate love and anger. The first contained some lively sarcasms on august personages ; the second rather too much physiology. On her return, she had commanded Samuel to burn these two compromising epistles in her presence : he had deceived her, and burnt only the envelopes and some blank paper.

The thought of her compositions being read out some day in court or printed as they ran in a society journal alarmed the princess and made the blood boil in her veins ; she did not care to let Paris and St Petersburg into the story of a passion which was odious in the retrospect, or to publish to the world at large that the wife of a Governor-General of Moscow had had an intrigue with a sharper ;—but then to let such a delightful revenge slip from her hands ! renounce the pleasure of gods and princes ! allow the man who had deserted her and just now braved her to succeed in his dark intrigue ! To this she could not consent, and the result was, that she hardly closed her eyes during the whole of the night she spent at Maisons.

CHAPTER XI.

NEXT morning, after breakfast, Mademoiselle Moriaz was walking alone on the terrace. The weather was delightfully mild. Her head was bare, and she had put up her white silk parasol to shade her from the sun, for Samuel Brohl had been a true prophet, and the sun was shining. She looked up at the sky, where the dry storm of the previous night had left no trace, and thought she had never seen it so blue. She looked at her flower-borders and saw blossoms which perhaps were not to be found there. She looked at the irregular slope of orchard bordering the terrace, and admired the foliage of the apple-trees, which autumn had already sprinkled with gold and purple; the grass rose high round their stems and it glistened and smelt sweet. Above the apple-trees she saw the spire of the church at Cormeilles, which was also amusing itself by watching the clouds float by.

It was a fête-day, and the pealing bells spoke to the happy girl of that distant mysterious land which we remember, though we have never seen. Their silver voices met with a response in the happy cluck of some hens. She felt at once that this was a joyous day in poultry-yards as well as in belfries, and that high and low were celebrating an arrival. What seemed to her more charming than all the rest, was a small recessed gate at the bottom of the orchard, the arch over which was hung with ivy. This was the gate through which he was to come.

She walked round the terrace several times. The gravel seemed elastic and rose beneath her feet. Mademoiselle Moriaz had never felt herself so light; life, present and future, weighed no heavier upon her than a bird on the hand which holds it and feels it quiver. Her heart quivered like a bird; it had wings, and only wanted to fly. She fancied she saw happiness everywhere; in the air, on the breeze, in every noise and every silence. She gazed with a smile on the wide landscape which lay beneath her eyes, and the glittering Seine smiled in return.

A servant came to announce that a strange lady wished to speak to her. The next instant the stranger appeared, and Mademoiselle Moriaz was disagreeably surprised by finding herself in the presence of the Princess Gulof, whom she would have been glad never to set eyes on again. "What an annoying visit," thought she, as she offered her a seat on a bench. "What can this woman want with me?"

"It was to M. Moriaz that I wished to speak," said the princess. "They tell me he is out. I shall be setting out for Calais in a few hours and cannot await his return, and so I have decided on addressing myself to you, Mademoiselle. I am come to render you one of those little services which women never refuse each other, but first of all I wish to be able to count on your absolute discretion; I do not wish to appear in this matter."

"In what matter, madame?"

"No trifling one; it relates to your marriage."

"You are much too kind to interest yourself in my marriage, but I do not see—"

"You will ~~soon~~ see. Then you promise me—"

"I promise nothing, madame, that I do not understand."

The princess looked at Mademoiselle Moriaz a little blankly. She had fancied herself talking to a dove, but now discovered that the dove was less meek and more stiff-necked

than she had supposed. For a moment she hesitated as to whether she would end the interview, but finally decided to proceed.

"I have a story to tell you," she went on in a familiar tone, "pray give me your attention; I am much mistaken if it will not interest you in the end. It is now thirteen or fourteen years since one of those mishaps to which travellers are liable obliged me to pass some hours in a wretched Galician town. The inn, or rather pot house, at which I stayed was very dirty; the proprietor, a mean-looking little German Jew, was dirtier than his tavern, and had an equally dirty son. I am prone to illusions about men. In spite of his filth, I thought the youth interesting. His wretched father refused him any instruction and beat him cruelly; he looked intelligent and gave me the impression of a fresh water fish condemned to swim round a puddle. His name was Samuel Brohl, do not forget this. I took pity on him, and could find no other way of delivering him than that of buying him from his father. The dreadful little man asked me an exorbitant price: I assure you that his demands were ridiculous. I was not in funds, my dear, I had no more money with me than just what I required for continuing my journey, but I had a bracelet on my arm which fortunately took his fancy. It was a Persian ornament, rather singular than beautiful; I can see it now: three gold plaques, decorated with fantastic animals and joined by a kind of filigree plait. I was attached to this bracelet, which had been brought me from Teheran. There was a secret spring to one of the plaques; inside this I had had the most interesting dates in my life engraved, and beneath them my creed, which does not concern you. Ah! my dear, when we are once bitten by the dangerous passion called philanthropy, we become capable of exchanging a Persian bracelet for a Samuel Brohl, and I can tell you that I was swindled in my bargain. The

wretched boy ill repaid my kindness. I sent him to the university and afterwards attached him to my person as my secretary. He was an ungrateful lad ; one fine day he took to his heels and vanished."

"It was shocking ingratitude," broke in Antoinette, "and your kindness met with an ill return, madame; but I do not quite see what connection there can be between Samuel Brohl and my marriage."

"You are too impatient, my love. If you had given me time, I should have told you that yesterday I had the most unexpected pleasure of dining with him at Madame de Lorey's. This German has made rapid strides since I lost sight of him. Not content with becoming a Pole, he is now a person of rank. His name is Count Abel Lariński, and he is shortly to marry Mademoiselle Antoinette Moriaz."

The colour rushed to Antoinette's cheeks, and her eyes flashed. The princess misunderstood the feeling animating her, and said: "Don't be angry or indignant, my dear; it will do you no good. There is no denying that a scoundrel capable of deceiving such a charming girl, is worthy of more than death; but beware of creating a scandal. Scandals, my dear, always produce dirty water which splashes everybody, and there is a rather vulgar, but very sensible Turkish proverb which says: 'The more you pound garlic, the stronger it smells.' Believe me, you will not escape without a touch of ridicule; there are some mistakes which always provoke mirth, and it is useless to furnish entertainment for the whole world. Thank heaven, you are not yet the Countess Larinski, and I have arrived just in time to save you. Keep silence as to the discovery you have just made, don't mention it to Samuel Brohl, but search for a good excuse to break off your engagement. You would not be a woman if you could not find ten that would do as soon as one."

Mademoiselle Moriaz could restrain herself no longer.

"Madame," she cried vehemently, "will you consent to tell Count Larinski, in my presence, that his name is Samuel Brohl?"

"I made that statement to him yesterday, mademoiselle, and it would be useless for me to repeat it. He was more dead than alive, and I felt really sorry for the state into which I cast him. I cannot hide from myself that it is all my fault; why did I take this lad from his father's tavern and his native mire? Perhaps, had he stayed there, he might have been honest. It was I that sent him forth into the world and made him ambitious to rise. I put some trumps in his hand, he found that he was not winning fast enough and began to cheat. It is not for me to be hard on the poor devil, we owe something to our protégés, and, once again, I don't wish to appear any more in this matter. Promise me that Samuel Brohl shall never be informed of my interview with you."

She was answered, in a haughty tone: "I promise you, madame, never to insult Count Larinski by repeating to him one word of the highly probable story you have just told me."

On receiving this reply the princess started to her feet, planted herself in front of Mademoiselle Moriaz, and gazed at her in silence; then in the most ironical of tones she said: "Ah, you don't believe me, my dear. Of course you don't in the least believe me. You are right; it does not do to trust an old woman's babble. No, my darling, there is no such person as Samuel Brohl; I dined at Maisons yesterday with the most genuine of Count Larinskis, and all that remains for me to do is to offer my best wishes for the certain happiness of the Countess Larinski, et cætera, Countess Larinski and partner."

With these words she curtseyed, turned on her heels and disappeared.

Mademoiselle Moriaz* seemed stunned for a moment, and roused herself with difficulty. She asked herself whether it had not all been a vision or nightmare, whether it was a real live Russian princess who had just been there, sitting by her side, and saying such extraordinary things that the Corneilles belfry could not hear them without falling into a profound stupor. The Corneilles belfry was indeed silent, its bells had ceased to ring; a terrible stillness reigned for miles around.

Antoinette soon mastered her emotion. "I thought this woman rather crazy the day before yesterday," said she to herself; "she is a wicked lunatic, I long for Abel to come, he will tell me what passed between him and this dotard at that dinner, and we shall laugh over it. Maybe nothing happened at all. Ought not the Princess Gulof to be shut up in an asylum? It is very wrong to let such maniacs go at large. It might give rise to accidents; the bells at Corneilles have stopped ringing. Oh, what can be the meaning of it? Madame de Lorey must have had a hand in the matter. It is a continuation of her grand conspiracy. How many acts are there in the play? This is the second or third; but some jests make people angry. I shall end by being indignant."

The Princess Gulof had wasted her labour. Mademoiselle Moriaz felt that during the last twenty minutes she loved Count Larinski more than ever.

The hour was approaching, he must be on his way; she had never been so impatient to see him. She caught sight of some one at the other end of the terrace; it was M. Camille Langis, proceeding to the laboratory. He turned his head, retraced his steps and came towards her. M. Moriaz had asked him to make a translation of two pages of a German pamphlet which he found some difficulty in understanding. Camille had brought his translation; this might be his

reason for returning within two days to Cormeilles, or it might be only his pretext.

Mademoiselle Moriaz could not help reflecting that his visit was inopportune, and that he generally chose his time ill. "If the count finds him here again," thought she, "I am not afraid of his making a scene, but all his pleasure will be spoiled." So she received M. Langis with a slight coldness which he perceived.

"I am in the way," said he, preparing to retreat.

She detained him, and changing her tone, said: "You are never in the way, Camille. Sit down."

He sat down and began to talk of the Chantilly races, where he had been the day before. She listened and nodded her head in token of approbation; but she only heard his voice through a mist which veiled all sounds. She raised her hand to drive away a wasp whose buzz irritated her; the lace of her sleeve fell back, leaving her wrist uncovered.

"You have a curious sort of bracelet there," said M. Langis.

"Have not you seen it before?" she answered. "Yet it is some time since—"

She stopped, an idea had suddenly struck her, she looked at her wrist. This bracelet which never left her, the bracelet given her by Count Larinski, and prized by him because it had been his mother's, and worn by the late Countess Larinski in her last moments, was unlike any other; but Mademoiselle Moriaz noticed how much it resembled the Persian bracelet which the Princess Gulof had described as having been exchanged for Samuel Brohl. The three gold plaques, the monstrous animals, the little chains of woven filigree, all corresponded exactly. She took it from her arm and held it out to M. Langis, saying: "It seems that there is something written inside one of these plaques; but to open it one must know the secret spring. Can you find out secrets?"

He examined the bracelet carefully, "Two of these plaques," said he, "are solid and of massive gold; the third is hollow and might serve as a box. I can see here a tiny and almost invisible hinge; but it is useless to look for the spring, I cannot find it."

"Is the hinge strong?"

"Not very, and it would be easy to force open the lid."

"That is what you must do," she replied.

"What are you thinking of? Heaven preserve me from injuring an ornament that you are fond of!"

She replied: "I have become acquainted with a Russian princess who is mad upon physiology and dissections. She has infected me with her tastes, and I wish to begin dissecting. I like this ornament, but I want to know what is inside it. Do as I tell you," she continued. "You will find the necessary appliances in the laboratory. Go, the key is in the door."

He eyed her; her glance sparkled and her manner was peremptory, as she repeated: "Go at once! Don't you understand me?"

He obeyed, and went to the laboratory with the bracelet. In five minutes, he returned.

"I am very awkward," he said, "and have damaged the lid in forcing it; but you would make me do it, and now your curiosity will be gratified."

She was fully able to gratify her curiosity. She seized the bracelet eagerly, and saw, engraved on the gold of the under plaque, now laid bare, some tiny, almost microscopic characters. By dint of attentive examination, she succeeded in deciphering them. She made out several dates, marking the years, months, and days, which had proved eventful to the Princess Gulof. These dates, unaccompanied by any notes, had once sufficed to her to recall the principal experiments she had tried upon men before Samuel Brohl fell in her

way. The result had not been satisfactory, for beneath this species of calendar might be read her confession of faith in these words: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." This melancholy declaration was signed, and the signature was very legible. Mademoiselle Moriaz spelt it out easily, though her eyes were dim, and it convinced her that the ornament given her by Count Larinski as a family relic had once belonged to Anna Petrovna, Princess Gulof.

She turned deadly pale and her head swam, she felt as if she were going out of her mind. In her agony, she thought she saw herself far away, a tiny dot at the end of the world, climbing a mountainous ridge beyond which a man was waiting for her. She asked herself, which was Mademoiselle Moriaz, that traveller or herself. She closed her eyes and saw a black abyss opening before her, engulfing her life as a whirlpool sucks in a fallen leaf.

M. Langis drew near, tapped the palms of her hands lightly and said: "Whatever is the matter?"

She roused herself and tried to raise her head, but it drooped again. She felt a choking at her heart, and an irresistible longing to open it to some one. She felt the man who was speaking to her to be one of those to whom a woman might tell her secret, a soul into which she might pour her shame without a blush. In a broken voice she began a confused and disjointed story, which Camille found it difficult to follow. But at length he understood it, and was divided between an immense pity for her desperate grief and the fierce lover's joy which made him ready to choke.

The Cormeilles belfry had recovered its voice; it struck two. Antoinette rose suddenly, exclaiming: "He asked me to meet him near that pretty little gate you see below. He would have a right to be angry if I kept him waiting."

And she turned towards the flight of steps which led from

the terrace into the orchard. M. Langis followed and tried to detain her.

"You must not see him again," said he. "I will go and meet him. Pray entrust me with your explanations."

Antoinette repulsed him, and said in a commanding tone : "I mean to see him and speak to him ; no one but myself can tell him what is in my heart. I order you to remain here ; I do not intend him to lay the blame on any one else but myself." And with the ghost of a smile on her lips, she added : "Fancy that I do not yet believe in his having deceived me ; I shall not believe it till I have read the lie in his eyes."

She ran down the orchard and stood for five minutes with her eyes fixed on the gate, watching for Samuel Brohl. In her impatience she counted the seconds, though she could have wished the gate would never open. Near her stood an old apple tree of which she was fond ; in former days she had more than once slung her hammock from one of its arched branches. She went and leaned against the rugged trunk of the old tree. Then she felt as if she was no longer alone, as if she had some one there to protect her.

At length the gate opened, admitting Samuel Brohl with a smile on his lips. His first words were : "Where is your parasol ? You have forgotten it."

She answered : "Don't you see that there is no sunshine ?" and remained leaning against her apple-tree.

He raised his hand to point to the blue sky, but it dropped to his side. He looked at Antoinette and trembled. He guessed at once that she knew all, but put a bold face on the matter.

"I passed a miserable day yesterday ; Madame de Lorcy set me down to table with a lunatic ; but the night made up for it : in my dreams I again saw the Engadine, the fir-trees, the cedars, emerald lakes, and a red hood."

"And I too dreamed last night. I dreamt that the bracelet you gave me once belonged to the lunatic you speak of, and that she had had her name engraved on it."

She tossed the bracelet to him: he picked it up and examined it, turning it round and round in his trembling fingers. She grew impatient. "Look at the plaque which has been forced. Cannot you read?"

He read and was stupified. Who could have suspected that the ornament he had found among his father's possessions had come from the Princess Gulof, and was the price she had paid for Samuel Brohl's deliverance and infamy? Samuel was a fatalist; he felt that his star had waned in its course, that chance had conspired to ruin his hopes, that he was condemned and lost. Profound dejection came over him.

"Can you tell me what I ought to think of a certain Samuel Brohl?" asked she.

This name, as it fell from her lips, crushed him like a lump of lead; he could never have believed that human words could carry such weight. He staggered beneath the blow, then striking his forehead with his clenched fists, he replied: "Samuel Brohl is deserving of your pity as well as mine. If you knew all that he has suffered and dared, you could not help pitying and admiring him. Listen to me, Samuel Brohl is an unfortunate—"

"A pitiful creature!" said she, interrupting him in a terrible voice. She began to laugh hysterically, and cried: "Madame Brohl! I cannot consent to be called Madame Brohl! Oh, that poor Countess Larinski!"

He shivered with a paroxysm of rage that would have terrified her, had she known what stirred within him. He raised his head, and folded his arms across his chest with a bitter smile, as he said: It was not the *man* you loved, but the *count*."

She answered: "The man I loved had never lied."

"True, I lied," cried he, gasping, "and I own my shame without remorse or disgust. I lied because I loved you to distraction, because you were dearer to me than my honour, because I despaired of touching your heart and shrank from nothing that might bring me nearer to you. Why did I ever meet you? Why could I not see you without feeling you to be the realised ideal of my life? Happiness was swiftly fleeting, it would have vanished for ever, but I caught it in a snare. I lied. Who would not purchase your love by a lie?"

Samuel Brohl had never looked so handsome as at this moment. Despair and passion kindled a dark flame in his eyes; he had all the sinister charm of a fallen angel. He fixed a look of fascination on Antoinette, which said: "What is my name, my deceptions, or anything else to you? My face is not a mask, and I am the man with whom you fell in love."

He never suspected the extraordinary facility with which Antoinette had taken back the heart so easily given; he had no conception of the miracles wrought by contempt. The Middle Ages believed in golems, clay figures of dazzling beauty, which were, to all appearance, alive. Beneath a lock of hair they concealed the word *truth* written on their forehead in Hebrew characters. If by chance they uttered a lie, the word faded out; they lost all their charm, and the clay became simply clay.

Mademoiselle Moriaz divined Samuel Brohl's thoughts, and exclaimed: "The man whom I loved was the one whose story you told me."

He felt he would have liked to have killed her in order that no one else might have her. Twenty paces behind her, the edge of a draw-well was to be seen; the sight of it turned him dizzy. He discovered with despair that he lacked courage for a crime.

He fell on his knees in the grass, exclaiming: "If you do not forgive me, I have nothing left but to die." She remained motionless and impassive, repeating Camille Langis' speech between her teeth: "I am waiting till this great actor has finished his part."

He rose and ran towards the well. She was there before him, blocking the way; but at the same instant she felt a pair of hands encircling her waist, and the breath of a pair of lips seeking hers, and murmuring: "You love me still, since you will not let me die."

In her horror she struggled violently, and succeeded by a frantic effort in freeing herself. She fled towards the house, followed by Samuel Brohl, who was on the point of laying hold of her, when he stopped abruptly. He had just caught sight of M. Langis rushing out of a clump of shrubs where he had lain hidden. Having grown anxious, the latter had stolen down unnoticed by a path concealed by trees and shrubs, Antoinette ran to him, panting for breath, and crying. "Camille, save me from this man!" -threw herself into his arms, which closed round her with rapture. He felt her droop, and had he not held her, she would have fallen.

At the same moment he was addressed in a threatening voice, which said: "We shall meet again, sir."

"This very day," replied he.

There was a wild look on Antoinette's face; she neither saw nor heard, and her limbs could no longer support her. Camille had some difficulty in getting her back to the house; she could not ascend the steps up to the terrace, and he was obliged to carry her.

Mademoiselle Moiseney caught sight of him, and filled the air with her cries. She ran to meet them and lavished every attention on her queen. While endeavouring to restore her to consciousness, she kept asking Camille for

explanations to which she only half listened ; and interrupting him at every word to exclaim : " It is all a scheme, and you are the soul of the plot. I see it all, you bear Antoinette a grudge ; your wounded vanity could never get over her refusal, and you are determined to have your revenge. Perhaps you flatter yourself that she will end by loving you. She does not love you and never will. Who are you that you dare to compare yourself to Count Larinski ?——Hold your tongue. As if I believed in your Samuel Brohls ! I know nothing of Samuel Brohl. I would stake my head that there is no such person."

" You would not be staking much, mademoiselle," retorted M. Moriaz, who had arrived in the interim.

Antoinette continued for an hour in a state of silent stupor, then violent fever set in. When the doctor who had been sent for arrived, M. Langis followed him into the sick-room. She was delirious ; she sat up and passed her hand continually over the upper part of her forehead ; she kept trying to efface the impure traces of a kiss that she had received one moonlight night, and the mark left on her hair by the touch of a bat which had clung to her hood. These two things were confounded in her memory. Every now and then she kept saying : " Where is my portrait ? Give me back my portrait."

It was towards ten o'clock that night when M. Langis presented himself at the abode of Samuel Brohl, who was not surprised to see him, having anticipated the visit. Samuel had regained his self-possession. He was calm and dignified. Yet the tempest through which he had passed had left its traces on his countenance. His lips quivered, and his beautiful chestnut locks twined round his temples like serpents, imparting the aspect of a Medusa's head.

His words to Camille, were : " When and where ? Our seconds will see to the rest."

"You mistake the purport of my visit," was M. Langis' reply. "I am sorry to destroy your illusions, but I have not come with the least idea of arranging a meeting."

"Do you refuse me satisfaction?"

"What satisfaction can I owe you?"

"You have insulted me."

"When?"

"And you said: 'The day, the place, and the weapon, I leave to you.'"

M. Langis could not help smiling. "Then you acknowledge at last that your swoons are feigned?" said he.

"Acknowledge in return," retorted Samuel, "that you insult people when you believe them incapable of hearing you. Your courage takes precautions."

"Be reasonable," resumed Camille, "I placed myself at Count Larinski's disposal, but you cannot expect me to fight with a Samuel Brohl."

Samuel sprang forward with indignant fierceness towards the young man, who stood firm, awing him by his determined look. He darted a sinister glance at Camille, drew back and sat down, biting his lips till the blood came; then said, in a calm voice: "Will you be so good as to inform me, sir, what procures me the honour of your visit?"

"I am come to ask for a portrait which Mademoiselle Moriaz wishes to recover."

"If I refused to restore it, you would of course appeal to my delicacy of feeling?"

"Can you doubt it?" replied Camille ironically.

"That proves that you still believe in Count Larinski, and are indeed speaking to him at this moment."

"Let me undeceive you. I came in search of M. Samuel Brohl, who is a man of business, to transact a business matter with him." And drawing out a pocket-book, he said: "You see, I am prepared."

Samuel leaned back in his chair. With half closed eyes he looked at M. Langis through his lashes ; his face altered, his nose became more hooked and his chin more pointed ; he was no longer the lion, but the fox. On his lips there played the honeyed smile of the usurer, laying his snares for youthful scions and scenting a good chance. If Jese-miah Brohl could have looked in from the other world and seen him at that moment, he would have recognised his own son.

At last he said to Camille : " You are a clever man, sir. I am disposed to listen to you."

" I am glad to hear it, and in fact, I felt sure of it. I know you to be very intelligent and inclined to turn vexatious circumstances to the best account."

" Pray spare my blushes. I am much obliged to you for your excellent opinion : but I ought to warn you that I am considered rather avaricious, and you will have to leave some of your feathers between my fingers."

M. Langis' sole reply was a tap of his hand on his pocket-book, which was stuffed with bank-notes. Then Samuel took a casket from a locked drawer, and opened it.

" Here is a most precious trinket," said he. " The locket is gold and the miniature exquisitely painted. It is a real work of art, the colouring is equally perfect with the drawing. The mouth is marvellously rendered ; Mengs or Liotard could not have surpassed it—what value do you set on this gem ?"

" You are more of a connoisseur than myself ; I will take it at your own valuation."

" I will part with this work of art for five thousand francs ; a mere nothing."

Camille prepared to produce the five thousand francs from his pocket-book. How hasty you are !" resumed Samuel. " This portrait is not simply valuable as a work of art ; I

am sure it has a sentimental value in your eyes, for I suspect that you are deeply in love with the original."

"Are you cross-examining me?" retorted Camille, casting on him a withering glance.

"Don't excite yourself. My business habits are methodical and precise. My father always kept to a fixed price; I am like him and make no reductions. You can easily understand that what is worth five thousand francs to a friend may be worth twice as much to a lover. This trinket is worth ten thousand francs. You can take it or leave it."

"I will take it," replied M. Langis.

"While we are on this subject," pursued Samuel, "I have some other articles which might suit you."

"Perhaps you mean to suggest that I should purchase your old clothes!"

"Let us come to an understanding; I have other articles of the same description."

And he produced from a cupboard the red hood, which he spread out on the table.

"Here are some old clothes, to use your own expression, which may possibly interest you. The hood is of a beautiful colour, if you saw it in the sun, it would quite dazzle you. The material is common, I allow, a poor quality of cashmere, but if you examine it more closely, you will be struck by its peculiar scent, what the Italians call *l'odor femminile*."

"And what price does your tariff set on *l'odor femminile*?"

"I wish to be accommodating. You shall have this hood and its perfume for five thousand francs. I am giving it away."

"Of course. We will say ten and five, that makes fifteen thousand."

"One moment. You had better pay in a lump; I have still something else to offer. One might suppose the floor

was burning your feet, and that you could not bear to be in this room."

"I own that I long to quit this—what shall I call it?—this shop, this den or cavern."

"You are young, sir; you should never be too hasty; over haste makes people overlook things which they afterwards regret. You would be sorry to go without taking these two bits of paper."

With these words he drew from his pocket-book two letters and unfolded them.

"Is there much more?" asked Camille. "I am afraid of running short and having to return for fresh supplies."

"Well, I cannot part with these two letters for a mere crust of bread, and especially the second. It is but twelve lines—but then the pretty pointed hand! Just look at it, and the style is so tender and affectionate. I may add that it is signed. Oh, how charmed Mademoiselle Moriaz will be to recover her handwriting! How much obliged she will be to you! You can make the most of it, and tell her that you terrified me, and wrung them from me by threats. With what a gracious smile she will reward your heroism!—I think, sir, that this smile, like the locket, is worth ten thousand francs; the two trifles are of equal value."

"If you want more, don't hesitate to say so."

"No, sir. As I have said, I have but one price."

"Then, according to this reckoning, I owe you twenty-five thousand francs. Have you nothing else to sell me?"

"Alas! that is all."

"Will you swear it?"

"What, sir, then you admit that Samuel Brohl has his word of honour to give you, and that if he swears, he is to be believed?"

"You were right, I *am* very young."

"It is all, as I have said," resumed Samuel, with a sigh.

"My shop is but poorly furnished ; I was getting up my stock, but a provoking accident has interfered with my trade."

"Never mind, comfort yourself," replied M. Langis, "you will find some other opportunity ; such a superior talent as yours cannot fail to do so. You have been unfortunate, but fortune will make you amends some day, and the world will recognise your gifts."

So saying, he laid on the table twenty-five notes of a thousand francs each. He counted them, Samuel counted them after him, and then handed over the locket, the hood, and the two letters.

Camille rose to go. "Monsieur Brohl," said he, "from the day I first saw you, I formed the highest idea of your character, but the reality has exceeded my expectations. I am delighted to have made your acquaintance, and venture to hope that you do not regret having made mine. Yet I can scarcely hope that we shall meet again."

"Who knows?" replied Samuel, suddenly changing his expression and attitude. And he added : "If you are fond of surprises, be so good as to remain one minute longer in this cavern."

He twisted up the twenty-five thousand franc notes like a curl-paper ; then, with a gesture, worthy of a Poniatowski, held them to a candle ; they caught fire, and he threw them burning into the grate, where they burned away to nothing. Then turning towards M. Langis, he exclaimed : "Will you do me the honour of meeting me?"

"After such a noble action, I can refuse you nothing," replied Camille. "I will do you this great honour."

"That is what I want," resumed Samuel. "I am the offended party, and have the choice of weapons." And as he saw M. Langis out, he said : "I will not deny having been a constant frequenter of shooting galleries, I am a first-rate pistol shot."

Camille bowed and retired.

Next morning, in a lucid interval, Mademoiselle Moriaz saw a locket and scarlet hood laid at the foot of her bed. From that moment, the doctors summoned for consultation began to be more hopeful.

CHAPTER XII.

Six days afterwards, Samuel Brohl, having passed through Namur and Liège without stopping, arrived by rail at Aix-la-Chapelle. He put up at the Hôtel-Royal, near the station, and ordered a copious breakfast, which he washed down with some creaming champagne. He had a good appetite, his mind was at ease, his heart light and happy, and his head in the skies. He had avenged himself and punished an insolent rival; Mademoiselle Moriaz might not be Samuel Brohl's, but she would never be the bride of Camille Langis.

Close to the Franco-Belgian frontier, on the edge of a wood, a man had been hit full in the breast by a pistol bullet; Samuel Brohl had seen him fall and some one had cried, "He is dead!"

People call Aix-la-Chapelle a dull town, and declare that the very dogs grow weary of their life, and piteously beg the passers-by to give them even a kick to vary its monotony. Samuel was not in the least bored during the evening he spent in the city of Charlemagne. He had always before his eyes a woodland glade and a man falling struck down by his bullet, and a delightful thrill went through him.

After the champagne, he drank some punch, and then slept like a dormouse; unfortunately sleep dispelled the pleasant

visions, and the awaking was not cheerful. He had a fatal habit of reflection ; he reflected, and his reflections saddened him ; he had taken his revenge, but what was that after all ?

He thought for a long time of Mademoiselle Moriaz, and gazed with a melancholy glance on the two hands whose talons had released their prey. He repeated half aloud some German lines to this effect :

“I am resolved to bury my songs and my dreams ; go and bring me a large coffin. Why is this coffin so heavy ? Because I have buried my love and my sufferings with my dreams.”

When Samuel had repeated these lines, he felt sadder than before, and cursed the poets.

“They have done me a great deal of harm,” said he to himself bitterly. “Without them, I had nothing to do but let the halcyon days fleet by in the service of a certain old lady. My future was secured, but they disgusted me with the way in which I was earning my bread. I believed their words and became the dupe of their empty spoutings ; they inspired me with an absurd contempt and with the unhealthy ambition of playing the part, a very foolish part, of a man of magnanimous sentiments. What has it brought me to now ?”

Samuel Brohl was right, semi-scoundrels have a claim on our pity. Their conscience occasionally throws light on their circumstances ; they have a faint glimpse of what they really are, become disgusted and vainly wish to turn honest, and this produces an inconsistency in their lives which ruins their enterprises ; a feature quite unknown to thorough rascals, who throw themselves heart and soul into their business and are never disgusted with themselves. Samuel was a romantic scoundrel, and he discovered that his romance, after costing him dear, had not brought him in anything. He was ready to exclaim with Brutus, “Virtue, thou’rt but an empty name !”

He was tired of the Old World, where unlucky meetings sometimes take place, to say nothing of the ground being poor and yielding nothing but brambles, where it is vain to manure the soil since the seed will not come up. He had made up his mind to go to Holland and take ship thence to America. What would he do in the United States? He had no idea yet. He reviewed every calling that presented itself as suitable to his mind, but they all required some capital.

Thanks to Providence and Herr Guldenthal,—whose bill ran some risk of being protested—he was not destitute of all resources; but, only a week before, he had twisted up and burned twenty-five Bank of France notes. He looked back rather remorsefully on this act; he could not help reminding himself that a revenge costing twenty-five thousand francs was a luxury in which poor devils had no right to indulge themselves. While meditating on this incident, he felt as if it had not been himself who had burnt those notes, or that he had at least mechanically executed this *auto-da-fé*, by a kind of unreflecting impulse, like a marionette moving at the pull of an invisible string.

The phantom partner with whom he habitually conversed rose up with a sneer on its lips, and Samuel addressed it—for the last time.

“You are my evil genius,” said he. “You are the madman who led me into this extravagance. It was you, Abel Larinski, who lighted that candle, you put the notes in my hand, took my arm and stretched it out, holding it above the fatal flame. This act of sublime heroism was your work; it was not I, but you, who purchased so dearly the pleasure of astonishing and killing the man who insulted me. A thousand curses on the day when I first assumed your name and conceived the mad project of becoming your representative. I turned Pole; has Poland ever had the faintest idea of prudence? You were the man above all others incapable of making your

way in the world, I copied a bad model and made blunder after blunder. Abel Larinski, you and I will part company. I hereby dissolve our partnership. Yes, noble Pole, I restore you your name and title, and with them all you made over to me; your pride, your claims, your fatal delicacy of feeling, your attitudes, your sentimental grimaces and nodding plume."

And thus Samuel Brohl took a final leave of the noble Count Abel Larinski, who was henceforth to rest quietly in his grave, no longer tormented by fears of his dead self being compromised by a living man. What name should Samuel take now? Being disenchanted with his destiny, he chose for the time being the humblest he could think of, and called himself Kicks, his mother's name, which means a false stroke, a miss-cue at billiards.

His dejection would have been unbounded, could he have suspected that Camille Langis was still in existence. For a fortnight Camille Langis hung between life and death, but at last the surgeon succeeded in extracting the ball. Madame de Lorey had started at once for Mons and nursed him like a mother, till she had the joy of bringing him back to Paris alive.

Care had been taken not to give Mademoiselle Moriaz any account of the duel nor even to mention it; her condition caused anxiety for some time, and she was spared all emotion. After becoming convalescent, she remained sad, sombre and taciturn. She never made the slightest allusion to what had happened, and would not allow it to be mentioned. She had been deceived, and her mistake had left behind it a mingled sense of mortification and mistrust; she felt incapable for the future of anything but recollection and silence.

Towards the end of November, M. Moriaz proposed that they should return to Paris. She expressed a wish not to leave Cormeilles, but to pass the winter in seclusion, for she shrank from human faces. M. Moriaz ventured to show he

how unreasonable she was. "Do you mean to mourn for ever over a stranger?" asked he, "for after all, you never saw the man whom you really loved, the real Count Abel. Why, bless me, what does it all amount to? that you made a mistake. Well, and is there, I will not say one woman, but one member of the Institute, who has not been grossly imposed upon, at least once in his life? Science progresses through the failure of experiments."

Then, taking a higher standpoint, he strove to show her that, vexatious as it may be to be deceived, it is a still greater evil to have an overpowering dread of being cheated, since it is better to lose one's way than not to walk at all.

When he had finished his exhortation, she shook her head, saying: "I have no faith in any one now."

"What! not even in the brave fellow to whom you owe the recovery of your likeness and letters?"

"Whom do you mean?" she exclaimed.

He then told her the story of Camille's interview with Samuel Brohl, without mentioning its ultimate results.

"Ah, it was very good of him, very good," said she. "I never doubted the reality of Camille's friendship."

"Friendship? Are you sure that what he feels for you is nothing more than friendship?"

And hereupon M. Moriaz finished his story to the end. She became thoughtful and fell into a reverie, when, suddenly, the door opened and in walked Camille.

After inquiring about her health, he told her that he had been ill in consequence of a chill, and that though he had now recovered, his doctor was sending him to winter at Sorrento.

She answered: "It is a trip I should like to make. Will you take me with you?"

She looked him full in the face, and that look told all. He knelt down before her, and they remained for some

moments with their hands clasped in each other's, gazing into each other's eyes. While they were in this attitude, Mademoiselle Jeanne Moiseney made her appearance, and stood petrified at the sight of this group.

"You are astonished now, I suppose, mademoiselle," said M. Moriaz.

"Not so much as you imagine," retorted she, recovering herself. "I dared not say so, but at the bottom of my heart I always thought and expected—. Yes, I was always sure that it would end so."

"Long live Pope Joan!" exclaimed he. "I give up all hopes of reclaiming her."

We have not succeeded in discovering what Samuel Brohl is doing in America. Is he humbly awaiting, in obscurity, a return of better fortune? Has he ventured on another matrimonial scheme? Has he become a reporter for the *New York Herald*, a politician in a northern state, or a "carpet-bagger" in South Carolina? Does he dream of becoming one day president of the glorious republic of the stars and stripes? Up to this time, no American paper has devoted the smallest paragraph to him.

Adventurers, whether Jews or Christians, are apparitions which vanish and reappear; they belong to the family of livers, but after diving and diving again, they always perish by some catastrophe. The wave bears the drowning man to shore for an instant and then carries him back to engulf him in the briny abyss; the lap of the waters is heard, a faint splash, and a hoarse cry, followed by a stifled gasp, and Samuel Brohl is gone. For some days there is a discussion as to whether his name was Brohl, Kicks, or Larinski, then something else is talked of, and his memory is buried in eternal silence.

